

March 2026 Edition



UPSC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

AI Powered Magazine for Smarter UPSC Prep'



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to the March Issue of PadhAI — an AI-powered magazine designed by UPSC experts to make your preparation smarter, faster, and deeply exam-oriented.

Why This Magazine Exists

Dear Aspirant,

PadhAI Magazine was created from a simple observation: most failures occur not due to lack of effort, but due to three critical gaps—delayed content, scattered resources, and weak exam linkage.

We built this magazine to solve those exact problems.

Most current affairs resources reach you 15–30 days late. By then, exam relevance has already faded.

Relevance is everything in UPSC preparation. A topic that matters today becomes a sideshow in a month

What Makes This Magazine Different

At PadhAI, we operate differently:

Speed & Relevance

- We publish within a week—so you learn while the topic is still relevant for exams
- You grasp concepts before they become old news, giving you a real head start
- Early understanding means better retention and confidence when these topics appear in questions

Exam-Aligned Restructuring

- We don't report news. We extract exam-aligned concepts
- Every article is built around three core questions:
 - What will Prelims ask?
 - How will Mains expect you to analyze it?
 - What concepts build from this topic?

Complete Integration

- Every article links to previous year questions, practice MCQs, and structured answers
- Alongside this magazine: daily PIB summaries, Current Affairs & GS topics explained, and AI tutor chat support
- One integrated system instead of scattered resources that are wasting your time

What's Inside This Edition

This December edition brings you the most relevant national and international updates, rewritten into crisp, high-retention smart notes. Each topic is restructured to focus on:

- Concept clarity — What you need to understand
- Governance relevance — Why it matters to India's systems
- Analytical value — How to think about it for both Prelims and Mains

Our Guiding Philosophy

At PadhAI, everything is built on three principles:

- **Learn only what matters**
- **Learn it the right way**
- **Learn it at the right time**

Let's make learning intelligent — not overwhelming.

—The PadhAI Team

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6. Climate science credibility: it's not opinion. It's evidence.
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2. Micron chip plant in Gujarat: India finally gets a seat at the silicon table
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4. Navic satellite fails: India's 'make in space' dream hits turbulence
5. Lhc discovers new particle: physics just rewrote a page of its own textbook
6. Superconductor temperature record broken: a cooler future gets warmer
7. Bacteria now make designer proteins: science doesn't take days off
8. Covid vaccine & blood clots: the mystery science just cracked open
9. Algorithmic sovereignty: India's data future cannot be outsourced
10. Cassava brown streak disease (cbsd): a silent threat to Africa's food security
11. Lpg vs lng vs png vs cng: understanding the four faces of natural gas

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2. Kalyan Singh & Babri: A lie that history refused to archive quietly.
3. Mahad at 99: The lake that became a battlefield for human dignity.
4. Ambedkar on UCC: He backed it – with a condition we keep forgetting.
5. K.N. Panikkar: The historian who refused to let power write the past.
6. Tribal Arts Fest: Where culture breathes – far from the policy files.
7. Tamil's global moment: A language that survived – now thrives.
8. The colour red: Life, death & everything India holds sacred.
9. Sahitya Akademi 2025: The writers who made India read.
10. Jhumka meets Ralph Lauren: Who owns India's heritage – India or the market?
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6. Women in politics: The quota is coming – the question is when.
7. TB at 100: India's oldest enemy – still not defeated.
8. DNTs in the census: Counted as citizens, invisible as a community.

9. Children & malnutrition: When the plate is half empty and the policy is fully delayed.
10. Women in judiciary: CJI asks for diversity – the system asks for time.

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1. Salar de Pajonales (Chile) – Place in News Module
2. Persian Gulf's "Pearl" – Strategic Hotspot in News
3. Durand Line – "A Colonial Scar That Still Bleeds"
4. Musi Riverfront (Hyderabad) – Place in News Module
5. Strait of Hormuz – "21 Miles That Control the World's Energy Pulse"
6. Fujairah Port (UAE) – Place in News Module
7. Kurdistan – "The Eternal Frontline" (Now in Iran Conflict)
8. Goa's Green Cover – Place in News Module
9. Chabahar Port – India's Gateway to Central Asia (Under Threat)
10. Great Nicobar Island – Place in News Module
11. Trincomalee – Sri Lanka's Quiet Port With Loud Geopolitical Ambitions
12. Kharg Island – Iran's Critical Oil Hub in the Crosshairs
13. Kharg Island – The Oil Hub in the Crosshairs
14. Aras River – Place in News Module
15. Darfur Region (Sudan) – Place in News Module
16. Durand Line – "Place in News" Analysis
17. Litani River – "Place in News" Analysis

Person in News

1. K. N. Panikkar
2. Jürgen Habermas
3. Robert S. Mueller III
4. Sonam Wangchuk
5. Mark Carney
6. Jayanthi Kumaresh
7. Marco Rubio
8. Mojtaba Khamenei
9. Balendra Shah (popularly known as Balen Shah)
10. Shiv Pratap Sandhu (commonly referred to as "Sandhu" in news reports)

Subject

Polity



1. RTI: The Right to Know – Now You See It, Now You Don't

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Concerns raised over amendments weakening transparency obligations under RTI Act, 2005.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. The RTI Act was enacted in 2005 to operationalize the **fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution.
- II. It replaced the Freedom of Information Act, 2002, and established a framework for citizens to request information from government bodies.
- III. Over time, RTI has played a crucial role in exposing corruption, improving governance, and empowering citizens.
- IV. However, recent structural and functional issues have diluted its impact.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **RTI Act, 2005:** Provides citizens the legal right to access information from public authorities within 30 days
- **2019 Amendment Act:** Gave the central government power to determine the tenure and salaries of Information Commissioners, raising concerns over independence

- **Institutional Weakness:** Large number of vacancies and backlog in Central and State Information Commissions

- **Declining Transparency:** Increased use of exemptions under Section 8 and denial of information

- **Digital Divide Issues:** Online RTI systems are not uniformly accessible across all states

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- RTI is derived from **Article 19(1)(a)** (Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression)
- **Section 6:** Filing of RTI application
- **Section 7:** Disposal within 30 days (48 hours in life & liberty cases)
- **Section 8 & 9:** Exemptions from disclosure
- **Central Information Commission (CIC):** Statutory body
- **2019 Amendment:** Changed service conditions of CIC and ICs
- Static + Current Linkage: Governance + Accountability + Polity

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following is/are true regarding the RTI Act, 2005?

1. It allows access to information from private bodies.



2. It mandates proactive disclosure of certain information by public authorities.
3. It overrides the Official Secrets Act, 1923 in case of conflict.

Mains PYQ:

“The RTI Act is not all about citizens’ empowerment alone, it essentially redefines the concept of accountability.” Discuss.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Discuss the significance of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 in promoting transparency and accountability in governance.
- Examine the challenges faced in its implementation and suggest reforms. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The Right to Information Act, 2005 applies only to central government institutions.
2. Information must be provided within 30 days under normal circumstances.
3. The RTI Act overrides the Official Secrets Act in case of conflict.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 only
(b) 1 and 2 only

- (c) 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

2. Constitution 101: Charity Begins at Home, Not in Parliament

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- National Law Day debate on grassroots constitutional literacy and civic education gaps.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. The Indian Constitution incorporates the idea of a **welfare state** through the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs)**, especially Articles 38 and 39, which promote social and economic justice.
- II. However, over time, competitive populism among political parties has led to an increase in **non-merit subsidies and freebie culture**, raising concerns about fiscal sustainability, efficiency, and accountability.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Welfare State Principle:** The Constitution mandates the state to promote welfare through DPSPs
- **Freebie Debate:** Increasing distribution of goods/services without economic justification



- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Excessive subsidies may violate principles of prudent fiscal management

- **Supreme Court Observations:** The Supreme Court of India has raised concerns over the impact of freebies on free and fair elections

- **Moral Hazard:** Overdependence on state benefits may reduce individual initiative and productivity

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 38:** State to promote welfare of the people

- **Article 39:** Principles of economic justice

- **Article 266:** Consolidated Fund of India (source of government expenditure)

- **FRBM Act, 2003:** Ensures fiscal discipline

- **Freebies vs Subsidies:** Merit vs non-merit distinction

- Static + Current Linkage: Polity + Economy + Governance

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following are included in the Directive Principles of State Policy?

1. Promotion of welfare of the people
2. Equal pay for equal work
3. Protection of environment

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the role of Directive Principles of State Policy in shaping the socio-economic policies of India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the growing trend of “freebies” in Indian politics in light of constitutional principles and fiscal responsibility.
- Suggest measures to strike a balance between welfare and economic sustainability. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. Directive Principles of State Policy are legally enforceable in courts.
2. The FRBM Act aims to ensure fiscal discipline in government expenditure.
3. Freebie culture can have implications for long-term fiscal sustainability.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)



3. 16th Finance Commission: Big Promises, Bigger Silences

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- 16th Finance Commission constituted by Centre to recommend Centre-State tax devolution for 2026–31.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. Under **Article 280 of the Indian Constitution**, the President constitutes a Finance Commission every five years. It recommends:
- II. Distribution of taxes between Centre and States
- III. Allocation among States
- IV. Grants-in-aid
- V. The previous **15th Finance Commission** introduced changes such as performance-based incentives and sector-specific grants.
- VI. The 16th Commission comes at a time of **increasing fiscal stress, GST-related uncertainties, and demands for greater state autonomy.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Constitutional Body:** The Finance Commission is established under Article 280 to ensure fiscal balance
- **Chairman:** Headed by Arvind Panagariya (16th Finance Commission)
- **Devolution Concerns:** States demand higher share in divisible tax pool

- **GST Impact:** Compensation issues and revenue uncertainties post-GST regime
- **Transparency Issues:** Limited public consultation and unclear criteria for recommendations
- **Fiscal Discipline vs Welfare:** Balancing deficit control with development needs

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 280:** Finance Commission provision
- **Vertical Devolution:** Centre vs States revenue sharing
- **Horizontal Devolution:** Among States distribution
- **Divisible Pool:** Taxes shared between Centre and States
- **Grants-in-Aid:** Article 275
- **15th FC Share:** 41% to States (reduced from 42% due to J&K reorganization)
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Polity + Economy + Federalism

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The Finance Commission is a statutory body.
2. It determines the distribution of tax revenues between Centre and States.
3. It is constituted every five years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?



Mains PYQ:

Discuss the role of the Finance Commission in strengthening cooperative federalism in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the role of the Finance Commission in ensuring fiscal federalism in India.
- In light of the 16th Finance Commission, discuss the challenges and reforms needed for equitable resource distribution. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The Finance Commission is constituted under Article 280 of the Constitution.
2. It recommends the distribution of financial resources only between States.
3. Grants-in-aid to States are recommended by the Finance Commission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

4. One Nation, One Election: One Giant Leap – Or One Giant Risk?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- High-Level Committee report tabled in Parliament proposing simultaneous Lok Sabha and state elections.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. India initially held simultaneous elections in 1952, 1957, 1962, and 1967.
- II. However, due to premature dissolution of assemblies and Parliament, the cycle was disrupted.
- III. The idea has been revived to address issues like **frequent elections, governance disruption due to Model Code of Conduct (MCC), and rising election expenditure.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Concept of ONOE:** Synchronization of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections across India
- **Constitutional Amendments Needed:** Changes in Articles 83, 85, 172, and 356 may be required
- **Administrative Efficiency:** Reduces repeated deployment of security forces and election machinery
- **Cost Reduction:** Significant savings in election expenditure for government and political parties



- **Federal Concerns:** May undermine regional parties and state-specific issues

- **Democratic Risks:** Voters may conflate national and state issues, affecting electoral choices

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 83(2):** Duration of Lok Sabha (5 years)
- **Article 172:** Duration of State Legislatures
- **Article 356:** President's Rule
- **Election Commission:** Constitutional body under Article 324
- **Model Code of Conduct (MCC):** Guidelines during elections
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Polity + Governance + Federalism

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The Election Commission of India conducts elections to both Parliament and State Legislatures.
2. The Model Code of Conduct is legally enforceable.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the challenges associated with conducting simultaneous elections in India. Do you think it is feasible? Give reasons.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the proposal of "One Nation, One Election" in the context of India's federal structure and democratic principles.
- Highlight its advantages and potential risks. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. Simultaneous elections were held in India until 1967.
2. The implementation of ONOE requires constitutional amendments.
3. The Model Code of Conduct is a legally binding document.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)



5. Reevaluating the office of the Speaker

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Opposition motion for removal of Lok Sabha Speaker raised, reviving debate on Speaker's neutrality.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. The office of the Speaker is provided under **Article 93** of the Constitution.
- II. Traditionally, the Speaker is expected to function in a **non-partisan manner**, despite being elected from a political party.
- III. The role gained prominence with the introduction of the **Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law)** through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985, where the Speaker acts as the adjudicating authority in disqualification cases.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Constitutional Position:** The Speaker is elected by the Lok Sabha under Article 93
- **Presiding Authority:** Maintains order, conducts proceedings, and decides on procedural matters
- **Anti-Defection Powers:** Acts as the adjudicator under the Tenth Schedule
- **Final Authority on Money Bills:** Decision of the Speaker is final (Article 110)

- **Concerns of Bias:** Allegations of political partisanship in disqualification cases
- **Judicial Review:** Decisions of the Speaker are subject to review by the Supreme Court of India

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 93:** Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha
- **Article 110:** Definition of Money Bill
- **Tenth Schedule:** Anti-Defection Law
- **52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985:** Introduced anti-defection law
- **Quasi-judicial Role:** Speaker acts as tribunal in disqualification cases
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Polity + Parliament + Governance

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is elected by the President of India.
2. The Speaker decides whether a bill is a Money Bill.
3. The Speaker can disqualify members under the anti-defection law.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the role of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha in maintaining parliamentary



democracy. How can neutrality of the office be ensured?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the powers and functions of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
- In light of recent controversies, critically analyze the challenges to the neutrality of the office and suggest reforms. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is elected by members of the House.
2. The Speaker's decision on Money Bills can be challenged in court.
3. The Speaker acts as an adjudicating authority under the Tenth Schedule.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

6. Impeaching the CEC: The law, and the process

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Opposition moved notice against CEC Gyanesh Kumar amid West Bengal SIR controversy.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. The Election Commission is a constitutional body under **Article 324**.
- II. It consists of the CEC and other Election Commissioners.
- III. The Constitution provides **security of tenure** to the CEC to safeguard free and fair elections.
- IV. The removal process is deliberately stringent to prevent political interference.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Constitutional Status:** Election Commission established under Article 324
- **Removal of CEC:** Same process as a judge of the Supreme Court of India
- **Parliamentary Process:** Requires impeachment on grounds of proved misbehaviour or incapacity
- **Special Majority:** Needs majority of total membership + 2/3rd of members present and voting
- **Protection Mechanism:** Ensures independence from executive interference



• **Other Election Commissioners:** Can be removed by the President on recommendation of the CEC

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 324:** Superintendence of elections
- **CEC Removal:** Same as SC judge (Article 124(4))
- **Grounds:** Proved misbehaviour or incapacity
- **Other ECs:** Removed on CEC's recommendation
- **Tenure:** 6 years or up to age of 65 years
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Polity + Constitutional Bodies

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
2. The removal process of the CEC is similar to that of a Supreme Court judge.
3. Other Election Commissioners can be removed without the recommendation of the CEC.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in ensuring free and fair elections.

How does the Constitution safeguard its independence?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the constitutional provisions related to the appointment and removal of the Chief Election Commissioner.
- Critically analyze whether these provisions strike the right balance between independence and accountability. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner is removed in the same manner as a Supreme Court judge.
2. The President alone can remove the CEC without parliamentary approval.
3. Other Election Commissioners require the recommendation of the CEC for removal.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)



7. The Right to Die with Dignity: SC Finally Says Yes

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- SC for the first time permitted passive euthanasia for a patient in vegetative state for 13 years.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. In the landmark Common Cause vs Union of India (2018) judgment, the Supreme Court legalized **passive euthanasia** and recognized living wills.
- II. Article 21 guarantees the **right to life and personal liberty**, which has been judicially expanded to include the **right to live with dignity**, and now, by interpretation, the **right to die with dignity in certain circumstances**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Right to Die with Dignity:** Recognized as part of Article 21
- **Passive Euthanasia:** Withdrawal or withholding of life support permitted
- **Living Will:** Individuals can specify medical treatment preferences in advance
- **Simplified Procedure:** Court eased earlier complex guidelines for executing living wills
- **Distinction Maintained:** Active euthanasia (intentional act to cause death) remains illegal

- **Medical Ethics:** Emphasis on patient autonomy and informed consent

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty
- **Passive Euthanasia:** Legal in India (with safeguards)
- **Active Euthanasia:** Illegal
- **Living Will / Advance Directive:** Legal recognition
- **Common Cause Case (2018):** Landmark judgment
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Polity + Ethics + Governance

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following rights are included under Article 21 as interpreted by the Supreme Court?

1. Right to privacy
2. Right to livelihood
3. Right to die

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the evolving interpretation of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. How has it expanded the scope of fundamental rights?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the legal and ethical dimensions of the "Right to Die with Dignity" in India.



- In light of recent Supreme Court judgments, discuss its implications for healthcare and individual autonomy. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. Passive euthanasia is legally permitted in India under certain conditions.
2. Active euthanasia is legal in India.
3. Living wills are legally recognized documents in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

8. OBC Creamy Layer: When Income Alone Doesn't Tell the Whole Story

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- SC ruled parental income alone cannot be the sole criterion to determine OBC creamy layer status.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. The concept was introduced in the landmark Indra Sawhney vs Union of India (1992) case, where the Supreme

Court of India upheld OBC reservations but mandated exclusion of the creamy layer.

- II. Currently, the creamy layer is determined primarily based on an **income threshold (₹8 lakh annually)**, along with certain **constitutional posts and high-ranking positions** being excluded irrespective of income.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Creamy Layer Concept:** Excludes advanced OBC sections to ensure equitable distribution of reservation benefits
- **Income Threshold:** Presently fixed at ₹8 lakh per annum (subject to revision debates)
- **Beyond Income:** Social status, occupation, and parental position also relevant
- **Judicial Mandate:** Introduced by the Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney case
- **Horizontal vs Vertical Equity:** Ensures fairness within OBC category
- **Policy Debate:** Whether to revise income limit or adopt multidimensional criteria

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Indra Sawhney Case (1992):** Introduced creamy layer concept
- **Applies to:** OBCs only (not SC/ST)
- **Income Limit:** ₹8 lakh annually (current benchmark)
- **Exclusions:** Constitutional functionaries, high-ranking officials
- **Reservation Cap:** 50% ceiling (with



exceptions in some cases)

- Static + Current Linkage: Polity + Social Justice

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The creamy layer concept applies to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
2. The Supreme Court introduced the creamy layer concept.
3. Income is the only criterion for determining the creamy layer.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Mains PYQ:

Examine the concept of the “creamy layer” in OBC reservations. How does it contribute to achieving social justice?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically analyze the criteria for determining the creamy layer among OBCs in India.
- Should income remain the primary determinant, or should broader social indicators be included? Justify your answer. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The creamy layer principle applies only to OBCs.
2. Income is the sole criterion for determining the creamy layer.
3. The concept of creamy layer was introduced by the Supreme Court.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

9. UCC: The Court Passes the Buck Wisely or Conveniently?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- SC declined to mandate Uniform Civil Code, calling it a matter within Parliament's legislative wisdom.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

1. The concept of UCC is enshrined in **Article 44** of the Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs), which urges the State to endeavor to secure a uniform civil code.



- II. India currently follows **religion-based personal laws**, leading to legal pluralism.
- III. The debate balances **secularism, gender justice, and cultural diversity**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Article 44 Mandate:** UCC is a Directive Principle, not enforceable by courts
- **Judicial Stand:** Courts have supported UCC in principle but avoided mandating it
- **Separation of Powers:** Legislature responsible for enacting UCC
- **Gender Justice:** UCC seen as a tool for ensuring equality, especially for women
- **Cultural Concerns:** Fear of erosion of religious identity and diversity
- **State-Level Developments:** Some states exploring UCC frameworks

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 44:** Uniform Civil Code (DPSP)
- **DPSPs:** Non-justiciable but fundamental in governance
- **Personal Laws:** Based on religion (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc.)
- **Secularism:** Basic feature of the Constitution
- **Shah Bano Case (1985):** Triggered UCC debate
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Polity + Society + Governance

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following is/are Directive Principles of State Policy?

1. Uniform Civil Code
2. Right to Education
3. Equal Pay for Equal Work

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the need for a Uniform Civil Code in India. What challenges are involved in its implementation?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the constitutional and societal implications of implementing a Uniform Civil Code in India.
- In light of recent judicial restraint, discuss whether the responsibility should rest solely with the legislature. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. Uniform Civil Code is a Fundamental Right under the Constitution.
2. Article 44 is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy.
3. The Supreme Court can directly enforce the implementation of UCC.



Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

10. Compulsory Voting: Democracy's Greatest Oxymoron?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Gujarat's compulsory voting model revisited amid ongoing electoral reform discussions.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. India follows a **voluntary voting system** under the framework of **universal adult suffrage (Article 326)**. Voting is considered both a **right and a civic duty**, but not a legal obligation.
- II. Some countries like Australia and Belgium have implemented compulsory voting, often with fines for non-participation.
- III. In India, proposals for compulsory voting have been debated but not implemented at the national level.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Concept of Compulsory Voting:** Mandates citizens to participate in elections
- **Democratic Participation:** May increase voter turnout and inclusivity

- **Freedom of Choice:** Non-voting is also a form of expression under Article 19
- **Administrative Challenges:** Enforcement in a large and diverse country like India
- **Informed Voting Concern:** Risk of uninformed or random voting
- **Global Examples:** Countries like Australia have high turnout due to compulsory voting

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 326:** Elections based on adult suffrage
- **NOTA (None of the Above):** Introduced in 2013
- **Voting:** Legal right, not a Fundamental Right
- **Election Commission:** Conducts elections under Article 324
- **Compulsory Voting:** Not practiced in India
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Polity + Governance

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Voting in India is a Fundamental Right.
2. NOTA allows voters to reject all candidates.
3. The Election Commission is a constitutional body.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?



Mains PYQ:

Discuss the significance of electoral participation in a democracy. Should voting be made compulsory in India? Justify your answer.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the concept of compulsory voting in the context of Indian democracy.
- Does it strengthen democratic participation or undermine individual liberty? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. Voting in India is a Fundamental Right.
2. Article 326 provides for adult suffrage.
3. NOTA enables voters to express disapproval of candidates.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

11. Transgender Rights Bill: Reform or Just Rebranding?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Govt introduced bill redefining 'transgender' identity, drawing criticism from rights activists.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. In the landmark NALSA vs Union of India (2014) judgment, the Supreme Court recognized **transgender persons as a "third gender"** and upheld their fundamental rights under Articles 14, 15, 16, and 21.
- II. The 2019 Act was enacted to give statutory backing to these rights, but several provisions have been criticized for **diluting the spirit of the NALSA judgment**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Legal Recognition:** Provides for recognition of transgender identity
- **Certification Process:** Requires application to District Magistrate, raising concerns over autonomy
- **Prohibition of Discrimination:** Covers education, employment, healthcare, and public services
- **Welfare Measures:** Mandates government schemes for rehabilitation and inclusion



- **Criticism:** No clear provision for reservation despite NALSA recommendation

- **Penal Provisions:** Lower penalties for crimes against transgender persons compared to others

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **NALSA Judgment (2014):** Recognized third gender
- **Articles 14, 15, 16, 21:** Fundamental Rights applicable
- **Transgender Act, 2019:** Legal framework for protection
- **Self-Identification Principle:** Recognized by SC but diluted in Act
- **National Council for Transgender Persons:** Advisory body
- Static + Current Linkage: Polity + Social Justice

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The NALSA judgment recognized transgender persons as a third gender.
2. The Constitution explicitly mentions "transgender" under Fundamental Rights.
3. Article 14 applies to all persons including transgender individuals.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the constitutional and legal safeguards available for transgender persons in India. Evaluate the effectiveness of recent legislative measures.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 in light of the NALSA judgment.
- Does it ensure substantive equality and dignity for transgender persons? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The NALSA judgment recognized transgender persons as a third gender.
2. The Transgender Persons Act, 2019 fully implements the principle of self-identification without restrictions.
3. Article 14 of the Constitution applies to transgender persons.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)



Subject

International Relations



1. West Asia War: The Script Everyone Saw Coming – And No One Stopped

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- US-Israel launched military strikes on Iran following the death of Supreme Leader Khamenei.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. West Asia has long been a hotspot due to:
- II. **Arab-Israel conflict**
- III. **Shia-Sunni divide** (notably between Iran and Saudi Arabia)
- IV. **US involvement and strategic interests**
- V. Presence of non-state actors like Hezbollah and Hamas
- VI. The region's strategic importance is amplified by its **energy resources and key trade routes**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Geopolitical Rivalries:** Power struggle between regional powers like Iran and Israel
- **Proxy Warfare:** Involvement of non-state actors across borders
- **Energy Security Risks:** Disruptions in oil supply impacting global markets
- **Global Power Involvement:** Role of major powers like United States and Russia

- **Humanitarian Crisis:** Civilian casualties and displacement
- **Failure of Diplomacy:** Ineffectiveness of international institutions in conflict prevention

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Strait of Hormuz:** Critical oil chokepoint
- **OPEC:** Oil-producing nations group
- **Abraham Accords (2020):** Normalization agreements involving Israel
- **Hezbollah & Hamas:** Key non-state actors
- **West Asia:** Strategic geopolitical region
- Static + Current Linkage: IR + Economy + Security

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following countries border the Strait of Hormuz?

1. Iran
2. Oman
3. Saudi Arabia

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the causes and consequences of conflicts in West Asia. How do they impact India's strategic interests?



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Analyze the root causes of recurring conflicts in West Asia.
- In light of recent escalation, discuss the implications for global stability and India's foreign policy. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The Strait of Hormuz is a major global oil transit route.
2. Iran and Israel are key rival powers in West Asia.
3. West Asia conflicts have no impact on global energy markets.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

2. Rare Earth MoU with Brazil: India Quietly Plays the Long Game

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India signed a MoU with Brazil for critical mineral cooperation to reduce China's rare earth dominance.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. Rare earth elements are a group of **17 critical minerals** used in:
 - II. Electric vehicles (EVs)
 - III. Wind turbines
 - IV. Electronics and semiconductors
 - V. Defense technologies
 - VI. Currently, China dominates global REE production and processing, controlling a significant portion of supply chains.
- VII. India has limited domestic capacity, making **strategic partnerships essential**.
- VIII. Brazil, rich in mineral resources, offers an alternative source and partnership opportunity.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Strategic Partnership:** India and Brazil to cooperate on REE exploration and processing
- **Supply Chain Diversification:** Reduces dependence on China-dominated supply chains
- **Critical for Energy Transition:** REEs vital for EVs, renewables, and green tech
- **Technology Collaboration:** Scope for joint R&D and processing capabilities
- **Geopolitical Significance:** Aligns with India's push for resource security
- **Economic Opportunity:** Boosts domestic manufacturing and industrial growth



PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Rare Earth Elements:** 17 minerals including neodymium, lanthanum, cerium
- **Key Uses:** Electronics, magnets, defense, renewables
- **Major Producer:** China (dominant global player)
- **India's Agency:** Indian Rare Earths Limited (IREL)
- **Not Actually "Rare":** Found in abundance but difficult to extract economically
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Geography + Economy + Environment

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following are applications of rare earth elements?

1. Electric vehicles
2. Wind turbines
3. Fertilizers

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the importance of rare earth elements in modern technology and the challenges associated with their supply chain.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the strategic importance of rare earth elements for India's economic and technological growth.

- In light of the India-Brazil MoU, discuss how such partnerships can enhance resource security. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. Rare earth elements are essential for manufacturing electric vehicles and wind turbines.
2. China dominates the global supply chain of rare earth elements.
3. Rare earth elements are extremely scarce in nature.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

3. India-US Trade Deal: Much Talk, Little Walk

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India-US bilateral trade agreement talks stalled amid Trump's reciprocal tariff threats.



BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. India and the United States are major trading partners, with bilateral trade exceeding \$100 billion.
- II. However, trade tensions have emerged over:
- III. **Tariff barriers**
- IV. **Withdrawal of GSP (Generalized System of Preferences)** benefits for India
- V. **Data localization and digital trade norms**
- VI. **Agricultural market access**
- VII. Efforts have focused on a **limited trade deal** rather than a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Trade Volume:** Bilateral trade remains strong despite disputes
- **Tariff Disputes:** Differences over duties on agricultural and industrial goods
- **GSP Withdrawal:** The US removed India from its preferential trade program
- **Digital Trade Issues:** Disagreements on data localization and e-commerce rules
- **Strategic Partnership:** Trade ties linked with broader geopolitical cooperation
- **Incremental Approach:** Preference for mini-deals over comprehensive agreements

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **GSP (Generalized System of Preferences):** Trade benefit scheme by the US
- **WTO:** Multilateral trade body governing global trade rules
- **FTA:** Free Trade Agreement eliminating/reducing tariffs
- **Trade Deficit:** Difference between imports and exports
- **Non-Tariff Barriers:** Regulations restricting trade beyond tariffs
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Economy + International Relations

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following are examples of non-tariff barriers?

1. Import quotas
2. Quality standards
3. Export subsidies

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the challenges in India-US trade relations. How can both countries overcome these differences to strengthen economic ties?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyze the key challenges hindering the conclusion of a comprehensive trade deal between India and the United States.



- Suggest a way forward to enhance bilateral trade cooperation. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) provides duty-free access to certain exports.
2. India currently enjoys GSP benefits from the United States.
3. Non-tariff barriers include regulations like quality standards.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

4. India-Canada: From Deep Freeze to Warm Handshake — What Changed?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- New Canadian PM Mark Carney visited India, signalling diplomatic reset after Nijjar-linked freeze.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. Tensions escalated following allegations made by Justin Trudeau regarding India's involvement in a domestic issue in Canada.
- II. India strongly rejected the claims, leading to:
- III. Diplomatic expulsions
- IV. Suspension of visa services
- V. Halt in trade negotiations
- VI. The relationship had previously been strong, marked by **people-to-people ties and economic cooperation**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Diplomatic Reset:** Gradual restoration of high-level communication channels
- **Trade Interests:** Ongoing discussions on Early Progress Trade Agreement (EPTA)
- **Diaspora Factor:** Large Indian-origin population in Canada influencing ties
- **Strategic Concerns:** Issues related to extremism and national security
- **Visa Services Resumption:** Step towards normalization of relations
- **Geopolitical Context:** Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and global forums

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Canada Capital:** Ottawa
- **Indian Diaspora:** One of the largest in Canada
- **Trade Talks:** EPTA (Early Progress Trade



Agreement)

- **G20 Membership:** Both India and Canada are members
- **Key Sectors:** Education, energy, agriculture
- Static + Current Linkage: IR + Economy

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following countries are members of the G20?

1. Canada
2. India
3. Spain

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the role of the diaspora in shaping India's foreign policy. Illustrate with examples.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyze the recent developments in India-Canada relations.
- What factors contributed to the diplomatic tensions, and what steps can both countries take to rebuild trust? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. India and Canada are both members of the G20.

2. Canada hosts a significant Indian diaspora.
3. India and Canada have no ongoing trade negotiations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

5. Strait of Hormuz: The World's Most Dangerous Chokepoint — And India's Headache

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Iran threatened to close Strait of Hormuz, disrupting India's critical LPG and crude oil shipments.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. The Strait of Hormuz connects the **Persian Gulf** to the **Gulf of Oman** and the Arabian Sea.
- II. It is bordered by:
- III. Iran (north)
- IV. Oman (south)
- V. Nearly **one-fifth of global oil trade** passes through this narrow passage.
- VI. Given its strategic importance, it has often been at the center of geopolitical tensions.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Strategic Location:** Gateway for oil exports from Gulf countries
- **Energy Lifeline:** Around 20% of global petroleum flows through it
- **Geopolitical Flashpoint:** Frequent tensions involving Iran and Western powers
- **Impact on India:** India imports a large share of crude oil via this route
- **Naval Presence:** Increased militarization and surveillance in the region
- **Global Economic Risk:** Disruptions can spike oil prices and affect global markets

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Location:** Between Iran and Oman
- **Connects:** Persian Gulf to Gulf of Oman
- **Chokepoint:** Narrow sea passage critical for trade
- **Oil Flow:** ~20% of global supply
- **Nearby Regions:** West Asia / Middle East
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Geography + IR + Economy

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following countries border the Strait of Hormuz?

1. Iran
2. Oman
3. UAE

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the strategic importance of maritime chokepoints for global trade. How does the Strait of Hormuz impact India's energy security?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyze the geopolitical and economic significance of the Strait of Hormuz.
- In light of recent tensions, evaluate its implications for India's energy security and foreign policy. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.
2. It is one of the busiest oil transit chokepoints in the world.
3. India is unaffected by disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)



6. West Asia on Fire: India Urges Diplomacy While Walking on Eggshells

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India called for dialogue and de-escalation while balancing ties with both Iran and the US-Israel bloc.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. West Asia has long been volatile due to:
- II. **Israel-Iran rivalry**
- III. **Proxy conflicts involving non-state actors**
- IV. **US strategic presence**
- V. **Energy geopolitics**
- VI. India maintains strong ties with multiple stakeholders, including Israel, Iran, and Gulf countries, making neutrality both **necessary and challenging**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Balanced Diplomacy:** India avoids taking sides while advocating peace
- **Energy Security:** Heavy dependence on oil imports from West Asia
- **Diaspora Concerns:** Millions of Indians reside in Gulf countries
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Strong ties with Israel and growing engagement with Iran

• **Trade Routes at Risk:** Disruptions in key maritime routes like the Strait of Hormuz

• **Evacuation Preparedness:** India may activate contingency plans for citizens abroad

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **West Asia:** Also known as Middle East
- **Strait of Hormuz:** Key oil transit chokepoint
- **Indian Diaspora:** Large presence in Gulf countries
- **OPEC:** Influences global oil supply
- **India's Policy:** Strategic autonomy in foreign policy
- Static + Current Linkage: IR + Economy + Security

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following factors make West Asia strategically important?

1. Energy resources
2. Trade routes
3. Religious significance

Mains PYQ:

Discuss India's approach to managing its relations in a conflict-prone region like West Asia. How does it balance competing interests?



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Analyze India's diplomatic strategy in West Asia amid ongoing conflicts.
- How can India balance its energy security, diaspora safety, and strategic autonomy? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. India maintains strong relations with both Israel and Iran.
2. West Asia is critical for India's energy security.
3. India follows a policy of complete alignment with one bloc in West Asia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

7. India at the UNSC: Standing for Rules-Based Order – or Playing Both Sides?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India supported the UNSC resolution calling for a ceasefire in West Asia amid escalating Iran conflict.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. India has served multiple terms as a **non-permanent member of the UNSC** and aspires for **permanent membership**.
- II. Its foreign policy is guided by:
- III. **Non-alignment (historically)** → evolved into **multi-alignment**
- IV. Emphasis on **sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peaceful resolution of disputes**
- V. Strategic partnerships with diverse actors like United States, Russia, and European nations
- VI. Recent global conflicts have tested this balancing act.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Rules-Based Order:** India supports adherence to international law and UN Charter
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Avoids taking rigid positions in geopolitical conflicts
- **Abstention Strategy:** Often abstains in contentious UNSC votes



- **Balancing Relations:** Maintains ties with both Western and non-Western powers
- **Global South Leadership:** Positions itself as a voice of developing countries
- **UN Reforms Demand:** Advocates expansion and democratization of UNSC

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **UNSC:** 5 permanent + 10 non-permanent members
- **Veto Power:** Held by P5 (USA, UK, France, Russia, China)
- **India's Status:** Non-permanent member (periodic terms)
- **UN Charter:** Foundational document of UN
- **Global South:** Developing nations bloc
- Static + Current Linkage: IR + Global Governance

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following countries are permanent members of the UN Security Council?

1. United States
2. Russia
3. India
4. China

Mains PYQ:

Discuss India's role in the United Nations Security Council. How does it balance its national interests with global responsibilities?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically analyze India's approach at the United Nations Security Council in the context of evolving global geopolitics.
- Does India's strategy reflect principled leadership or pragmatic balancing? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. India is a permanent member of the UN Security Council.
2. The UNSC has five permanent members with veto power.
3. India often abstains from voting in contentious UNSC resolutions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)



8. China's 'Border Villages': Concrete, Cameras & Creeping Sovereignty

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- China's expansion of model villages along LAC in Arunachal Pradesh raised fresh security concerns.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. China has pursued an aggressive border infrastructure policy under its “**Xiaokang (moderately prosperous villages)**” initiative.
- II. These villages are often built in **disputed or sensitive regions**, including areas near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- III. India and China have longstanding boundary disputes, particularly in **Eastern Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh**, making such developments strategically sensitive.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Dual-Use Infrastructure:** Civilian villages with potential military utility
- **Territorial Assertion:** Strengthens China's claims in disputed regions
- **Surveillance Network:** Integration of cameras and monitoring systems
- **Population Strategy:** Encouraging settlement in border areas

• **Strategic Pressure on India:** Alters ground realities near LAC

• **Response by India:** Accelerated border infrastructure and village development

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **LAC (Line of Actual Control):** De facto India-China boundary
- **Xiaokang Villages:** Chinese border development initiative
- **Arunachal Pradesh:** Claimed by China as “South Tibet”
- **Dual-Use Infrastructure:** Civil + Military use
- **Border Roads Organisation (BRO):** India's infrastructure agency
- **Static + Current Linkage:** Geography + IR + Security

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following regions are part of the India-China boundary dispute?

1. Aksai Chin
2. Arunachal Pradesh
3. Sikkim

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the challenges in India-China border management. How do infrastructure developments impact strategic balance?



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyze the strategic implications of China's border village policy along the India-China frontier.
- How should India respond to safeguard its territorial and security interests? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. China's border villages are purely civilian development projects with no strategic significance.
2. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the de facto boundary between India and China.
3. Arunachal Pradesh is a disputed region between India and China.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

9. Trump's Section 301: America's Favourite Trade Weapon Is Back

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- US initiated Section 301 trade investigation against India over alleged unfair trade practices.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. Section 301 is part of the **US Trade Act of 1974**, empowering the US Trade Representative (USTR) to investigate and respond to foreign trade practices.
- II. During the Trump administration, Section 301 was heavily used to impose tariffs on Chinese goods, triggering a **trade war**.
- III. Critics argue it bypasses multilateral dispute mechanisms under the **WTO framework**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Unilateral Trade Tool:** Allows the US to impose tariffs without WTO approval
- **Targeting Unfair Practices:** Focus on IP theft, forced technology transfer
- **Trade War Legacy:** Widely used against China during Trump era
- **WTO Concerns:** Undermines multilateral dispute resolution system
- **Global Impact:** Disrupts supply chains and increases trade tensions



• **Implications for India:** Potential exposure to tariffs and trade scrutiny

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Section 301:** US Trade Act, 1974 provision
- **USTR:** United States Trade Representative
- **WTO:** Multilateral trade dispute body
- **Trade War:** US-China tariff conflict
- **Protectionism:** Restricting imports to protect domestic industry
- Static + Current Linkage: Economy + IR

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following are functions of the World Trade Organization (WTO)?

1. Settling trade disputes
2. Promoting free trade
3. Imposing tariffs on member countries

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the impact of unilateral trade measures on the global trading system. How do they affect developing countries?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyze the implications of the renewed use of Section 301 by the United States on global trade governance.
- How should countries like India respond to such unilateral trade measures? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. Section 301 allows the United States to take unilateral trade action.
2. It is part of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism.
3. It has been used to impose tariffs on Chinese goods.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

10. Nepal's New Dawn: Why India Can't Afford to Look Away

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- RSP's Balen Shah emerged as Nepal's new PM, opening a fresh diplomatic opportunity for India.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. India and Nepal share a **unique relationship** characterized by:
- II. Open borders
- III. Deep cultural and historical ties
- IV. Economic interdependence



- V. However, relations have faced periodic strains due to **political instability in Nepal, border disputes, and increasing engagement of China in Nepal's infrastructure and politics.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Strategic Location:** Nepal acts as a buffer between India and China
- **Political Transition:** Frequent government changes impacting policy continuity
- **China Factor:** Expanding influence through infrastructure and investments
- **Economic Cooperation:** Trade, hydropower, and connectivity projects
- **Open Border:** Facilitates movement but poses security challenges
- **Cultural Ties:** Shared heritage and people-to-people connections

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Capital of Nepal:** Kathmandu
- **India-Nepal Treaty (1950):** Framework of bilateral relations
- **Open Border:** Visa-free movement
- **Major Rivers:** Kosi, Gandak, Mahakali
- **Hydropower Potential:** Significant in Nepal
- **Static + Current Linkage:** IR + Geography

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

Prelims PYQ:

Which of the following rivers originate in Nepal?

1. Kosi
2. Gandak
3. Brahmaputra

Mains PYQ:

Discuss the significance of Nepal in India's foreign policy. What challenges and opportunities does the relationship present?

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyze the strategic importance of Nepal for India in the context of changing regional geopolitics.
- How should India recalibrate its approach to strengthen bilateral ties? (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements:

1. India and Nepal share an open border.
2. Nepal lies between India and China.
3. China has no involvement in Nepal's infrastructure development.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)



Subject

Economy



1. PSU REVENUE: THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW ATM — BUT WHO PAYS THE BILL?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Centre shifted disinvestment strategy toward maximising PSU dividends to meet fiscal targets.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Public Sector Undertakings are government-owned enterprises in sectors like oil, power, steel, and banking.
- Historically, PSUs were established for strategic purposes and social objectives, not solely revenue generation.
- With rising fiscal pressures, the government increasingly treats PSUs as a “cash cow” to fund its schemes without raising taxes.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Record Contributions:** PSUs contributed over ₹2.5 lakh crore in FY2025–26 through dividends and taxes.
- **High Reliance:** Nearly 15% of non-tax revenue now comes from PSU earnings.

- **Investment Trade-off:** Funds extracted for revenue could have been used for modernization and capacity expansion.
- **Market Signals:** Over-leveraging PSUs for revenue may affect investor confidence and stock valuations of listed PSUs.
- **Social Impact:** Reduced PSU reinvestment may slow down employment generation and public welfare initiatives.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Largest PSU Contributors:** ONGC, IOC, Coal India, NTPC, and SBI.
- **Revenue Types:** Dividend payouts, corporate taxes, spectrum fees, and royalties.
- **Policy Reference:** Department of Investment & Public Asset Management (DIPAM) oversees disinvestment and dividend policy.
- **Budget Linkage:** FY2026 budget estimates ₹2.5 lakh crore from PSUs, highest ever.
- **Economic Indicator:** PSU revenue is a key measure of the government's fiscal health and non-tax income dependency.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements



regarding Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs):

1. PSUs are established to serve strategic and social objectives.
2. All PSUs are profit-oriented and operate without government oversight.
3. The government can levy dividends and taxes on PSU profits.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

● **Mains PYQ:**

"The over-reliance of the government on PSU revenue can impact long-term economic growth."

Critically analyse.

1. The government's dependence on PSU revenue has increased in recent years.
2. Extracting revenue from PSUs always enhances their operational efficiency.
3. Citizens can indirectly bear the cost of high PSU revenue extraction.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

2. GST HITS ₹1.83 LAKH CRORE: THE ONE TAX THAT ACTUALLY DELIVERED

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- GST collections rose 8.1% YoY in February 2026, reflecting sustained economic activity.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Introduced on **1 July 2017**, GST replaced multiple indirect taxes with a unified tax structure.
- It is levied on the supply of goods and services and is shared between the Centre (CGST) and States (SGST), with IGST for inter-state transactions.
- The GST Council, chaired by the Finance Minister, periodically revises rates and exemptions to balance revenue needs and economic growth.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Discuss the implications of treating Public Sector Undertakings as a primary source of government revenue.
- In your answer, highlight both fiscal advantages and potential socio-economic costs, with reference to India's current policy environment. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding PSU revenue in India:



- Digital invoicing, e-way bills, and better enforcement have improved compliance and collection efficiency.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Record Collections:** March 2026 GST collections reached ₹1.83 lakh crore, a 12% increase over last year.
- **Centre-State Split:** CGST: ₹80,000 crore; SGST: ₹71,000 crore; IGST: ₹32,000 crore.
- **Top Contributors:** Manufacturing, e-commerce, and petroleum-related products contributed the most.
- **Compliance Boost:** E-invoicing for large taxpayers and reverse charge mechanisms have enhanced revenue.
- **Fiscal Impact:** Strong GST collections reduce the government's borrowing needs and fiscal deficit pressure.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **GST Rates:** 0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, 28% depending on goods and services.
- **GST Council:** Apex body deciding GST structure, rates, and exemptions.
- **Key Features:** Destination-based tax, input tax credit, uniform rate for goods/services.
- **Revenue Trends:** Monthly collections crossing ₹1.8 lakh crore signal economic recovery.
- **Legal Basis:** Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016 enables GST.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding GST in India:

1. GST is a destination-based consumption tax.
2. GST replaced both central and state indirect taxes.
3. The GST Council is chaired by the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"GST has streamlined India's indirect taxation system but also poses challenges for small businesses."

Discuss with suitable examples.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Evaluate the significance of record GST collections in India.
- In your answer, examine its impact on the economy, fiscal health, and federal financial relations. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding GST revenue in India:



1. GST is levied on the supply of goods and services and shared between Centre and States.
2. GST always ensures revenue neutrality without compliance challenges.
3. Improved GST compliance strengthens fiscal health and reduces borrowing needs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

3. EPF AT 8.25%: YOUR RETIREMENT MONEY IS SAFE — FOR NOW

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- EPFO central board recommended retaining EPF interest rate at 8.25% for FY 2025-26.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- EPF was introduced under the **Employees' Provident Fund & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952**.
- Both employer and employee contribute **12% of basic salary** to the fund.
- The EPFO invests funds in government securities, bonds, and equities to generate returns.

- Interest rates are declared annually by the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) considering fund performance, inflation, and economic conditions.
- Declining global interest rates and market volatility influence EPF returns.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Interest Rate:** 8.25% for FY 2025-26, marginally lower than 8.50% in the previous year.
- **Fund Size:** EPF corpus exceeds ₹17 lakh crore, making it one of the largest retirement funds globally.
- **Coverage:** Over 6 crore active members and millions of pensioners benefit from EPF.
- **Solvency Focus:** Lowering interest rates helps maintain fund sustainability amid higher withdrawal demands.
- **Inflation Risk:** Real returns may be eroded if inflation outpaces EPF interest rates.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Contribution:** Employees and employers contribute 12% of basic salary; a portion of employer's contribution goes to EPS (pension).
- **Tax Benefits:** EPF contributions qualify for deduction under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act.
- **Withdrawal Rules:** Partial withdrawals allowed for home, medical emergencies, or education.



- **Administration:** Managed by EPFO under the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- **Recent Trends:** Interest rates have gradually declined from 8.65% in 2019–20 to 8.25% in 2025–26.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF):

1. EPF is mandatory for all salaried employees in India.
2. Both employer and employee contribute a fixed percentage of basic salary.
3. EPF withdrawals before retirement are subject to income tax.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"EPF continues to provide financial security to workers, but declining interest rates may affect real returns."

Analyse the significance of EPF in India's social security system and the challenges posed by changing interest rates.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically evaluate the role of the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) in

ensuring retirement security for salaried employees in India.

- Discuss its strengths, limitations, and the impact of declining interest rates on real returns. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF):

1. EPF contributions are made by both employer and employee at a fixed percentage of basic salary.
2. The EPF interest rate is guaranteed to always beat inflation.
3. EPF provides retirement savings and partial withdrawal benefits under certain conditions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

4. GDP REVISION: WHEN THE NUMBERS CHANGE, SO DOES THE STORY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Govt released revised GDP series with new base year, altering historical growth calculations.



BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures the total value of goods and services produced in a country over a period.
- In India, GDP estimates are prepared by the NSO under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Revisions may occur due to delayed reporting, updated surveys, or improved estimation methods.
- GDP can be calculated via **production (sectoral), expenditure, or income** approaches, each prone to adjustments.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Revised Growth Rate:** FY 2024–25 GDP growth was revised from 6.8% to 7.0%.
- **Sectoral Impact:** Agriculture, manufacturing, and services sectors saw adjustments in contribution estimates.
- **Policy Implications:** Fiscal deficit projections and interest rate policy may be impacted by such revisions.
- **Market Reaction:** Stock markets and investor sentiment can fluctuate based on revised GDP data.
- **Methodological Updates:** NSO periodically updates base year, price indices, and data collection methods for accuracy.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **GDP Definition:** Total monetary value of goods and services produced within a country in a given period.
- **Base Year:** Current base year for India is FY 2017–18.
- **Estimation Approaches:** Production (sectoral), expenditure, and income methods.
- **Key Indicator:** GDP revisions help align economic policy with the latest ground reality.
- **Global Comparison:** IMF and World Bank often adjust growth estimates based on national revisions.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding GDP in India:
 1. GDP can be estimated using production, expenditure, and income approaches.
 2. Once announced, GDP figures cannot be revised.
 3. GDP revisions can affect fiscal and monetary policy.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
“Revised GDP data can change the narrative of economic performance and influence policy decisions.”
Critically examine this statement with



reference to India's economic planning.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Analyse the significance of GDP revisions in India.
- Discuss how changes in GDP estimates can impact economic policy, investor confidence, and public perception of economic health. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding GDP revisions in India:

1. GDP revisions are made to reflect more accurate and updated economic data.
2. GDP revisions are primarily meant to adjust government revenue collection targets.
3. Sectoral contributions, such as agriculture and services, can be revised during GDP updates.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

5. INFLATION AT 3.2%: PRICES ARE RISING — JUST ASK YOUR GROCERY BAG

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Retail CPI inflation hit a 10-month high of 3.2% in February 2026, driven by food prices.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Inflation is the sustained rise in general price levels over time, eroding purchasing power.
- India measures inflation primarily through **CPI** and **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)**.
- CPI covers food, fuel, housing, and other consumption items, while WPI focuses on wholesale goods prices.
- Moderate inflation supports economic growth, but high inflation can hurt consumers, especially the lower-income groups.
- RBI's **monetary policy framework** targets inflation in the 2–6% range to balance growth and price stability.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Current Rate:** CPI inflation at 3.2% in March 2026.
- **Food Inflation:** Stood at 2.8%, aided by stable agriculture output and supply chains.
- **Fuel Inflation:** Moderated due to lower global crude prices and subsidies.



- **Core Inflation:** At 4.5%, indicating persistent price pressures in non-food sectors.
- **Policy Implication:** RBI maintains accommodative stance while monitoring inflation trajectory.
- **Consumer Impact:** Grocery and daily essentials witness moderate price increases; real incomes remain relatively protected.

3. RBI's inflation target band is 4–8%.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**
“Moderate inflation is necessary for economic growth, but rising prices affect consumers’ purchasing power.”
Examine the causes, impacts, and management of inflation in India.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **CPI vs WPI:** CPI reflects retail consumer prices; WPI reflects wholesale prices.
- **Target Inflation:** RBI inflation target band: 2–6% (medium-term).
- **Measurement:** Based on weighted basket of goods and services, revised periodically.
- **Key Drivers:** Food prices, fuel costs, housing, healthcare, and transport.
- **Global Linkage:** International commodity prices and supply chain disruptions influence domestic inflation.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding inflation in India:
 1. CPI measures the price level of goods and services at the retail level.
 2. WPI reflects the price movement of commodities at the wholesale level.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically analyse India’s current inflation scenario with CPI at 3.2%.
- Discuss the factors contributing to inflation, its impact on households and businesses, and the policy measures adopted to maintain price stability. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding inflation in India:

1. CPI measures inflation at the consumer retail level, while WPI measures wholesale prices.
2. Moderate inflation supports economic growth but erodes purchasing power if unchecked.
3. RBI's inflation target is 2–6%, and policy adjustments are made based on CPI data.



Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: D

6. RUPEE AT RECORD LOW: THE CURRENCY THAT KEEPS TESTING NEW FLOORS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Rupee fell to Rs 92.3 against the dollar amid oil price surge and West Asia conflict uncertainty.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. The Indian rupee is a **managed floating currency**, with its value determined by market forces but influenced by RBI interventions.
- II. Key factors affecting the rupee include:
 - A. **Trade Balance:** Higher imports than exports put downward pressure.
 - B. **Foreign Investment Flows:** Outflows reduce demand for INR.
 - C. **Global Dollar Strength:** US Fed policies and dollar index fluctuations impact INR.

D. **Crude Oil Prices:** India imports ~85% of its crude, making INR sensitive to oil prices.

- III. Currency depreciation can improve exports competitiveness but increases import bills, contributing to inflation.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Record Low:** INR traded near ₹92.50/USD in March 2026.
- **Trade Deficit Impact:** Widening trade gap increases demand for foreign currency.
- **Inflation Link:** Imported goods, especially oil, become costlier, affecting consumer prices.
- **RBI Intervention:** Occasional market interventions to stabilize rupee through forex reserves.
- **Global Factors:** Strong US dollar, rising interest rates abroad, and geopolitical tensions exacerbate depreciation.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Exchange Rate:** Price of one currency in terms of another; INR/USD shows domestic currency per dollar.
- **Managed Float:** RBI occasionally intervenes to prevent excessive volatility.
- **Forex Reserves:** India's foreign currency reserves help stabilize the rupee.
- **Impact on Economy:** Weak rupee increases import costs, affects inflation, and may impact foreign debt servicing.



- **Historical Context:** Previous all-time low in 2022 around ₹92.50/USD; current level surpasses that.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding the Indian Rupee:

1. The value of the rupee is determined entirely by market forces without any intervention.
2. A weak rupee can make exports more competitive but imports costlier.
3. Forex reserves are used by RBI to stabilize the currency when needed.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 2 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“Currency depreciation impacts inflation, trade, and investor sentiment in India.”

Analyse the causes and consequences of rupee depreciation and measures to manage it.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Discuss the implications of the Indian rupee reaching record lows against the US dollar.
- Examine its impact on trade, inflation, foreign investment, and monetary

policy, and suggest measures to mitigate adverse effects. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Indian rupee:

1. The rupee follows a fully flexible exchange rate system without any RBI intervention.
2. A depreciating rupee increases the cost of imports and can contribute to inflation.
3. Foreign exchange reserves can be used by the RBI to stabilize the rupee.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: B

7. UNEMPLOYMENT DATA: YOU CAN'T FIX WHAT YOU WON'T MEASURE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Expert panel called for robust employment data systems to better align policy with ground reality.



BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Unemployment refers to individuals of working age who are willing and able to work but unable to find employment.
- India uses **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** and other data sources like CMIE for official and private estimates.
- Types of unemployment include **structural, cyclical, frictional, and seasonal**.
- Accurate measurement helps the government design programs like **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**, skill development initiatives, and labor market interventions.
- High unemployment signals underutilization of human capital and may exacerbate poverty and inequality.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Current Rate:** PLFS 2024–25 shows unemployment around 7.5%, higher among urban youth at ~14%.
- **Youth Unemployment:** Graduates and skilled youth face difficulty finding jobs matching their qualifications.
- **Sectoral Trends:** Agriculture absorbs labor but underemployment remains; formal sector jobs remain limited.
- **Policy Measures:** Skill India Mission, Startup India, and MGNREGA aim to create employment opportunities.

- **Data Gaps:** Infrequent surveys and informal sector prevalence make accurate measurement challenging.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Measurement Tools:** PLFS, CMIE, Census data, NSSO surveys.
- **Unemployment Types:** Structural, cyclical, frictional, seasonal.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** % of the working-age population engaged in the labor market.
- **Policy Instruments:** MGNREGA, Skill India, PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana.
- **Global Context:** India's unemployment rate is lower than many developed countries in headline numbers but quality and underemployment remain concerns.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding unemployment in India:
 1. PLFS provides quarterly estimates of unemployment.
 2. MGNREGA aims to provide guaranteed employment to rural households.
 3. Unemployment includes individuals who are unwilling to work.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 2 only.



- **Mains PYQ:**

"High unemployment among youth is one of India's biggest economic challenges."

Critically analyse causes, consequences, and government initiatives to tackle youth unemployment.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the current unemployment situation in India.
- Discuss the importance of accurate measurement, its impact on economic planning, and the effectiveness of government schemes in generating employment opportunities. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding unemployment in India:

1. Accurate measurement of unemployment is essential for effective policy-making.
2. MGNREGA and Skill India schemes aim to provide employment and skill enhancement.
3. Unemployment only refers to those unwilling to work.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

8. FARM LOAN WAIVERS ARE BACK: POPULAR POLITICS VS. PRUDENT ECONOMICS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Several state govts announced farm loan waivers ahead of elections, reviving credit culture debate.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. Farm loan waivers have a long history in India, with states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Punjab frequently using them.
- II. Reasons cited for waivers include crop failure, price shocks, and farmer distress.
- III. Critics argue that waivers:
 - A. Burden state budgets, diverting funds from infrastructure or welfare.
 - B. Encourage default behavior, reducing credit discipline.
 - C. Do not address systemic issues such as market access, MSP, or input cost reduction.
- IV. Alternative measures suggested include crop insurance, direct income



support (PM-KISAN), and investment in irrigation and technology.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Recent Developments:** Multiple states announced waivers totaling ₹50,000–₹60,000 crore.
- **Political Angle:** Loan waivers often coincide with elections to gain rural support.
- **Fiscal Impact:** Repeated waivers can increase state debt and reduce capital expenditure.
- **Credit Discipline Risk:** Farmers may default expecting future waivers, affecting banks' lending behavior.
- **Sustainable Alternatives:** Crop insurance, minimum support prices (MSP), direct income transfers, and credit facilitation.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Types of Waivers:** Full loan waiver, partial waiver, interest subvention schemes.
- **Key Legislation:** Banking Regulation Act, RBI guidelines for restructuring and waivers.
- **Government Schemes:** PM-KISAN, Crop Insurance Schemes, Interest Subvention Schemes.
- **Fiscal Linkage:** Waivers funded from state budgets or central government contributions.
- **Economic Debate:** Short-term relief vs. long-term sustainability and investment.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding farm loan waivers in India:

1. Farm loan waivers are announced to relieve farmers of outstanding loans.
2. Repeated waivers can affect credit discipline and fiscal health.
3. Farm loan waivers completely solve farmer distress and rural poverty.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Farm loan waivers are politically popular but economically unsustainable."

Critically analyse the impact of farm loan waivers on fiscal health, agricultural credit, and rural development.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Discuss the economic and social implications of farm loan waivers in India.
- Evaluate their effectiveness as a policy tool and suggest alternative measures to address farmer distress sustainably. (150 words)



PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding farm loan waivers in India:

1. Farm loan waivers provide immediate relief to indebted farmers.
2. Repeated waivers can strain government finances and affect credit discipline.
3. Loan waivers completely eliminate structural challenges in agriculture.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

9. FDI FALLS FOR FIFTH MONTH: INVESTORS ARE WATCHING — JUST NOT INVESTING

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Net FDI remained negative for five consecutive months amid global uncertainty and capital outflows.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- FDI represents investments by foreign entities into India's businesses,

infrastructure, and startups, allowing ownership and long-term interest.

- India follows an **FDI-friendly policy** with sectoral caps, automatic routes, and ease-of-doing-business reforms.
- Major FDI sources: Singapore, Mauritius, USA, Netherlands, and Japan.
- Key sectors attracting FDI include services, IT, manufacturing, telecom, and automotive.
- FDI differs from **Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)**, which is short-term and speculative.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Recent Trend:** Fifth consecutive month of FDI decline, with March inflows at \$3.2 billion.
- **Sectoral Insight:** IT, telecom, and financial services saw reduced inflows; renewable energy and startups continue to attract attention.
- **Policy Context:** Government initiatives like Make in India, PLI schemes, and digital infrastructure aim to attract long-term FDI.
- **Global Factors:** Rising US interest rates, geopolitical tensions, and currency fluctuations affect capital flow.
- **Economic Implication:** Sustained slowdown in FDI can impact job creation, technology transfer, and current account financing.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Definition:** FDI refers to investment in a country by a foreign entity with significant control or ownership.



- **Automatic Route:** FDI allowed without prior government approval in many sectors.
- **Approval Route:** Required for sensitive sectors like defense, telecom, and aviation.
- **Major FDI Sectors:** Services, IT, manufacturing, telecom, automobiles, renewable energy.
- **Data Source:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) reports monthly FDI statistics.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India:
 1. FDI gives foreign investors ownership control in Indian companies.
 2. FDI inflows are recorded in India's Balance of Payments under capital account.
 3. All sectors require government approval for FDI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
"FDI is crucial for economic growth, but global uncertainties influence investment flows."

Analyse the factors affecting FDI inflows in India and suggest measures to enhance investor confidence.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the recent trend of declining FDI inflows in India.
- Discuss the implications for economic growth, employment, and technology transfer, and suggest policy measures to attract sustainable foreign investment. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding FDI in India:

1. FDI allows foreign investors to have significant ownership and long-term interest in Indian companies.
2. All sectors in India are open to FDI under the automatic route without any limits.
3. Global economic conditions, interest rates, and geopolitical tensions influence FDI inflows.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C



10. INDIA–EU CBAM DEAL: GREEN TRADE RULES WITH A LOCAL BLIND SPOT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India–EU FTA text failed to recognise Indian CBAM accreditors, threatening export competitiveness.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- The **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** is the EU’s climate policy to levy charges on carbon-intensive imports.
- India is one of the top exporters of steel, aluminium, and cement to the EU, sectors impacted by CBAM.
- The mechanism is intended to prevent “carbon leakage,” where production shifts to countries with lax emission norms.
- India negotiated safeguards to allow gradual compliance and technical support for exporters.
- The deal reflects the balance between global climate commitments and protecting domestic industry competitiveness.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Trade Impact:** Steel, aluminium, and cement exports from India to the EU are CBAM-sensitive.
- **Compliance Costs:** Indian firms may need investment in green technologies to meet EU carbon standards.

- **Phased Implementation:** India secured a transition period before mandatory compliance.
- **Environmental Angle:** Encourages India’s industries to reduce carbon intensity, aligning with Paris Agreement goals.
- **Economic Concern:** Smaller firms may struggle with cost burdens, affecting export competitiveness.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **CBAM Definition:** A carbon tax on imported goods from high-emission countries to the EU.
- **Affected Sectors:** Steel, aluminium, cement, electricity, and chemicals.
- **India–EU Negotiation:** Transition period granted for compliance; technical support for Indian exporters.
- **Global Context:** Part of EU Green Deal; aims to reduce global emissions and carbon leakage.
- **Policy Linkage:** Supports India’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and clean energy initiatives.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding the EU’s CBAM:
 1. CBAM imposes carbon costs on imports from countries with high emissions.



2. CBAM is aimed at preventing carbon leakage while promoting global decarbonisation.
3. CBAM applies only to EU domestic products and not imported goods.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

• **Mains PYQ:**

“Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) reflects the intersection of trade policy and climate action.”

Analyse the challenges and opportunities for India in complying with CBAM.

2. India has secured a transition period and technical support for compliance.
3. CBAM exempts all Indian exports regardless of carbon intensity.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

11. INSURANCE NUMBERS: WHAT THE BROCHURE DOESN'T TELL YOU

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- IRDAI proposed public insurance registry to improve transparency in India's insurance sector.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Insurance in India is regulated by **IRDAI**, established under the IRDA Act, 1999.
- Life, non-life, health, and crop insurance products aim to mitigate financial risk for individuals and businesses.
- **Life Insurance:** Policies provide risk cover plus investment returns.
- **Health Insurance:** Covers hospitalization and medical costs; still under-penetrated.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the India-EU CBAM deal.
- Discuss its implications for Indian exports, domestic industry competitiveness, and climate commitments, and suggest strategies to align trade with environmental objectives. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the India-EU CBAM deal:

1. CBAM imposes carbon taxes on high-emission imports to the EU.



- **Crop Insurance:** Aims to protect farmers from climate or price shocks; adoption is uneven.
- Despite rapid growth in premium collections, actual coverage gaps indicate risk exposure remains high.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Life Insurance:** 80% of total premiums; penetration increasing but still low per capita.
- **Health Insurance:** Covers only ~20% of the population; pandemic highlighted gaps.
- **Crop & Microinsurance:** Government schemes (PMFBY) improve reach but face operational challenges.
- **Insurance Density:** Average premium per capita remains low compared to developed countries.
- **Financial Literacy:** Limited awareness, complicated policies, and low trust hinder adoption.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Insurance Penetration:** Ratio of total insurance premiums to GDP (~4.2%).
- **Insurance Density:** Average premium per person (~\$78 in India vs \$5,000 in developed countries).
- **Regulator:** IRDAI regulates all insurance activities.
- **Major Schemes:** PMFBY, Ayushman Bharat, Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana.
- **Global Context:** India lags in insurance coverage and financial protection despite its growing economy.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding insurance in India:

1. Insurance penetration is the ratio of total premiums to GDP.
2. Life insurance dominates total premium collections in India.
3. Crop insurance has near-universal coverage among farmers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Insurance provides financial security but India remains underinsured in key sectors."

Analyse the challenges and policy measures to increase insurance coverage in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the state of insurance penetration in India.
- Discuss why significant portions of the population remain underinsured, the role of government schemes, and strategies to expand coverage sustainably. (150 words)



PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding insurance in India:

1. Life insurance accounts for the majority of total insurance premiums.
2. Insurance penetration in India is higher than most developed countries.
3. Crop and health insurance coverage remain limited despite government schemes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C



Subject

Geography



1. INDIAN CITIES & FLOODS: WE BUILD ON MEMORY, THEN DROWN IN IT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Study highlighted how Indian cities' historical flood-plains are being rapidly concretised, increasing flood risk.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- **Urbanization Pressure:** Rapid city growth has led to construction on floodplains, wetlands, and drainage channels.
- **Climate Change:** Increased frequency of extreme rainfall events amplifies flood risks.
- **Drainage Systems:** Many cities have outdated or poorly maintained stormwater systems.
- **Policy Frameworks:** National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) guidelines, Smart Cities Mission, and state-level urban flood management plans exist but are inadequately implemented.
- Lessons from past floods, such as the 2005 Mumbai floods and 2015 Chennai floods, show a pattern of repetitive vulnerability.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Recurrent Floods:** Cities face annual or bi-annual flooding during monsoon.
- **Economic Losses:** Urban floods disrupt transport, commerce, and livelihoods, costing billions annually.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Encroachment, clogged drains, and inadequate retention basins worsen impact.
- **Climate Impact:** Extreme rainfall events are increasing in intensity and frequency.
- **Policy Measures:** Urban flood mapping, early warning systems, and climate-resilient infrastructure are crucial for mitigation.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Key Terms:** Floodplain, stormwater drainage, urban runoff, retention basin.
- **Major Guidelines:** NDMA Urban Flood Management Guidelines, Smart Cities Mission climate adaptation plans.
- **Historical Events:** 2005 Mumbai floods, 2015 Chennai floods, 2022 Assam floods.
- **Urban Policy Linkage:** Development of wetlands, enforcement of zoning laws, and disaster preparedness.
- **Global Context:** Cities worldwide are adopting green infrastructure and urban flood resilience strategies.



PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding urban floods in India:

1. Rapid urbanization increases vulnerability to flooding.
2. Encroachment of wetlands and water bodies contributes to urban floods.
3. NDMA provides guidelines for urban flood management.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1, 2, and 3.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“Urban floods are not just natural phenomena but a result of human choices and planning failures.”

Discuss the causes of urban floods in India and the measures to enhance city resilience.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the challenges posed by urban floods in India.
- Discuss the role of climate change, urban planning, and policy measures in mitigating flood risks and enhancing resilience. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding urban floods in India:

1. Urban floods are primarily caused by heavy rainfall, without human-induced factors.
2. Encroachment of floodplains and inadequate drainage increases flood vulnerability.
3. NDMA provides guidelines and frameworks for urban flood management.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 2 and 3 only

Answer: B

2. SALAR DE PAJONALES: EARTH'S MARS — RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Chilean salt desert identified as Earth's closest Mars analogue, aiding planetary habitability research.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Location:** Salar de Pajonales, Atacama Region, Chile, ~4,200 meters above sea level.



- II. **Mars Analogy:** Surface composition, extreme dryness, and salt crusts resemble Martian regolith.
- III. **Scientific Significance:**
 - A. Astrobiology: Tests life's limits in extreme conditions.
 - B. Planetary Science: Simulates rover missions and remote sensing analysis.
- IV. **Economic Aspect:** Salar contains lithium-rich brines; Chile is among the top global lithium producers.
- V. Extreme conditions: Temperature swings, high salinity, UV radiation, low atmospheric pressure.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Mars-Like Conditions:** Hyper-arid, saline, high UV exposure, extreme temperatures.
- **Astrobiology Research:** Microbial extremophiles survive in brines and salt crusts.
- **Space Mission Testing:** Analog site for rover instruments and life-detection experiments.
- **Lithium Reserves:** Supports renewable energy storage technology; significant economic potential.
- **Global Attention:** Scientists from NASA, ESA, and universities conduct joint studies.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Definition:** Salar — a salt flat or salt-encrusted desert basin.
- **Key Features:** Extreme dryness, high UV, saline crusts, high elevation.

- **Scientific Importance:** Planetary analog for Mars; life survival studies.
- **Economic Linkage:** Lithium extraction for batteries and renewable energy applications.
- **Global Comparison:** Comparable to Salar de Atacama and Salar de Uyuni for Mars analog studies.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding Salar de Pajonales:

 1. It is located in Chile and exhibits extreme arid and saline conditions.
 2. It serves as a Mars analog for astrobiology and planetary research.
 3. It is primarily known for diamond mining.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

“Earth analogs provide crucial insights for planetary exploration and astrobiology.”

Examine how Salar de Pajonales contributes to understanding life in extreme environments and Mars mission planning.



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Discuss the scientific and economic significance of Salar de Pajonales.
- Highlight its role as a Mars analog, the study of extremophiles, and its potential contribution to global lithium supply. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Salar de Pajonales:

1. It is a high-altitude salt flat in Chile used as a Mars analog.
2. It contains lithium-rich brines and supports renewable energy applications.
3. It is famous for large-scale diamond mining.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

3. EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD FLIPPED — AND IT TOOK 70,000 YEARS TO RECOVER

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- New study found Earth's last magnetic pole reversal took ~70,000 years, longer than previously estimated.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Earth's Magnetic Field:** Generated by the motion of molten iron in the outer core.
- II. **Geomagnetic Reversal:** Happens irregularly; last full reversal ~780,000 years ago (Brunhes-Matuyama).
- III. **Excursions:** Temporary flips, like the Laschamps event (~42,000 years ago).
- IV. **Impacts:**
 - A. Increased cosmic radiation reaching Earth's surface.
 - B. Potential influence on ozone layer, climate, and species adaptation.
- V. **Detection Methods:** Paleomagnetic records in lava flows, sediments, and ice cores.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Laschamps Excursion:** ~42,000 years ago; field weakened to 5–10% of normal strength.
- **Recovery Time:** ~70,000 years to return to stable strength.



- **Biological Impact:** Possible correlation with megafaunal extinctions and human population stresses.
- **Technological Relevance:** Modern societies rely on geomagnetic shielding for satellites, power grids, and navigation.
- **Scientific Importance:** Helps predict future geomagnetic behavior and prepare mitigation strategies.

3. Temporary flips or weakening events are called geomagnetic excursions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Earth's geomagnetic field is dynamic, with reversals and excursions influencing life and technology."

Discuss the causes, effects, and scientific significance of geomagnetic reversals.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Magnetic Poles vs Geographic Poles:** Not fixed; magnetic poles wander.
- **Reversal vs Excursion:** Reversal is full flip; excursion is temporary weakening or partial flip.
- **Detection Tools:** Lava flow magnetization, sediment cores, ice core isotope analysis.
- **Frequency:** Irregular; last full reversal ~780,000 years ago.
- **Global Context:** Reversals are natural; no evidence of catastrophic mass extinctions caused solely by them.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the phenomenon of geomagnetic reversals and excursions, citing the Laschamps event.
- Discuss its potential impact on life, climate, and modern technological systems, and the lessons it provides for future geomagnetic changes. (150 words)

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding Earth's magnetic field:

1. The magnetic field is generated by the motion of molten iron in the outer core.
2. Magnetic field reversals occur at regular, predictable intervals.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Earth's magnetic field:

1. It is generated by molten iron movements in the outer core.
2. Magnetic field reversals happen at fixed intervals every ~100,000 years.
3. Temporary flips or weakening events are called geomagnetic excursions.



Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

4. MUSI RIVERFRONT: HYDERABAD'S GRAND VISION ON A TROUBLED RIVER

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Telangana govt's Rs 1.5 lakh crore Musi riverfront project drew scrutiny over displacement and ecology.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- **Musi River:** Tributary of Krishna River; flows through Hyderabad, historically central to the city's development.
- **Flood History:** Devastating floods in 1908 prompted urban planning interventions.
- **Current Challenges:** Industrial effluents, untreated sewage, siltation, and informal settlements.
- **Urban Riverfronts in India:** Projects like Sabarmati (Ahmedabad), Mithi (Mumbai), and Ganga (Varanasi) serve as benchmarks.
- **Objectives:** Pollution abatement, flood control, public spaces, heritage

integration, and economic revitalization.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Urban Renewal:** Development of parks, walkways, and recreational spaces along the riverbanks.
- **Flood Management:** Restoration of floodplains and stormwater channels to reduce risk.
- **Pollution Control:** Sewage treatment plants and industrial effluent regulation.
- **Heritage Conservation:** Protection of historical sites along the Musi River, integrating cultural identity.
- **Public-Private Partnership:** Project may involve private investment for commercial and tourism infrastructure.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Riverfront Definition:** Urban development along riverbanks integrating ecological, recreational, and commercial functions.
- **Key Indian Examples:** Sabarmati (Ahmedabad), Mithi (Mumbai), Ganga rejuvenation (Varanasi).
- **Challenges:** Pollution, encroachments, flood risk, and sustainability of interventions.
- **Policy Linkage:** National Mission for Clean Ganga, Urban Flood Management Guidelines (NDMA).
- **Urban Benefits:** Improved livability, tourism, flood mitigation, and heritage preservation.



PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding riverfront development in India:

1. Urban riverfronts aim to integrate recreation, flood control, and heritage conservation.
 2. The Musi River in Hyderabad is a tributary of the Godavari River.
 3. Riverfront projects can involve public-private partnerships.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Urban riverfront development enhances livability but faces ecological and social challenges."
Examine the importance, challenges, and best practices of riverfront projects in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically analyze the Musi Riverfront project in Hyderabad.
- Discuss its objectives, potential benefits, environmental challenges, and measures to ensure sustainable and inclusive urban river development. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Musi Riverfront project:

1. It aims to rejuvenate the river for recreation, flood management, and heritage conservation.
2. Musi River is a tributary of the Godavari River.
3. Public-private partnerships may be used for development and maintenance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only C. 2 and 3 only
B. 1 and 3 only D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: B

5. EARTHQUAKE ZONING WITHDRAWN: INDIA STEPS BACK JUST AS THE GROUND SHAKES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- The Centre withdrew a revised seismic zoning map after states raised objections over higher construction costs.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Earthquake Zoning:** Divides regions into zones (II–V) based on seismic hazard and expected intensity.



- II. **Seismic History:** India experiences frequent earthquakes along the Himalayas, Northeast, Indo-Gangetic plains, and Andaman-Nicobar region.
- III. **Past Maps:** The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) publishes maps linked to IS 1893 (Part 1): 2016, defining construction guidelines.
- IV. **Importance:**
 - A. Guides earthquake-resistant construction and urban planning.
 - B. Informs disaster management authorities and insurance risk assessments.
- V. **Concerns:** Delays in zoning clarity can increase vulnerability in urbanizing areas.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Zones Classification:** Zone II (low) to Zone V (very high seismic risk).
- **Regions at Risk:** Himalayan belt, North-East India, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, parts of Gujarat.
- **Construction Implications:** Enforces earthquake-resistant design under IS 1893.
- **Policy Gap:** Withdrawal may slow implementation of stricter building standards.
- **Global Context:** Seismic zoning is a common tool for disaster risk reduction in countries like Japan, US, and Turkey.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Seismic Zoning:** Division based on earthquake hazard; guides construction norms.
- **IS 1893 (Part 1):** Indian standard for earthquake-resistant design of buildings.
- **High-Risk Zones:** Himalayas, Northeast, Andaman & Nicobar, Kachchh.
- **Disaster Mitigation:** Zoning helps in early warning, urban planning, and insurance.
- **Global Practice:** Countries use hazard maps to reduce earthquake vulnerability.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding seismic zoning in India:

 1. It helps determine earthquake-resistant construction norms.
 2. Zone I indicates very high seismic risk areas.
 3. Seismic zoning is revised periodically by BIS.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

“Earthquake zoning is a critical tool for disaster preparedness and urban planning.”

Analyse the challenges and



implications of withdrawing or delaying seismic hazard maps in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Critically examine the importance of earthquake zoning in India.
- Discuss the potential risks arising from the withdrawal of the updated map and suggest measures to ensure resilient urban development and disaster preparedness. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding earthquake zoning in India:

1. It classifies regions from low to very high seismic risk.
2. Zone I represents areas of highest seismic hazard.
3. Seismic zoning informs building codes, urban planning, and disaster management.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

6. HIMALAYAN BUILDING CODES: SAFER HOMES DELAYED BY THE COST OF SAFETY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Safer earthquake-resistant building codes for Himalayan states stalled due to implementation cost concerns.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Seismic Risk:** Himalayan region lies in **Zone IV and V** (high to very high seismic hazard).
- II. **Indian Standards:**
 - A. **IS 1893 (Part 1):** Earthquake-resistant design.
 - B. **IS 13920:** Ductile detailing for reinforced concrete structures.
- III. **Challenges:**
 - A. High construction costs for earthquake-resistant buildings.
 - B. Limited technical expertise in remote areas.
 - C. Weak enforcement of building regulations.
- IV. **Policy Initiatives:** State disaster management authorities and NDMA provide guidelines, training, and incentives for resilient construction.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Seismic Zones:** Zone IV and V cover major Himalayan states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and parts of Jammu & Kashmir.



- **Cost Barrier:** Earthquake-resistant construction can increase costs by 10–20% compared to traditional methods.
- **Technical Expertise:** Shortage of trained engineers and masons in hilly regions.
- **Enforcement Gaps:** Local municipal authorities often lack capacity for monitoring compliance.
- **Long-term Benefits:** Resilient construction reduces loss of life, property damage, and recovery costs.

1. IS 1893 and IS 13920 provide standards for earthquake-resistant construction.
2. Enforcement of building codes in Himalayan states is uniform and strictly monitored.
3. Higher construction costs can hinder adoption of earthquake-resistant techniques.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Seismic Zones in India:** Zone II (low) to Zone V (very high).
- **Key Standards:** IS 1893 (earthquake-resistant design), IS 13920 (ductile detailing), NDMA guidelines.
- **Disaster Linkage:** Building codes mitigate earthquake, landslide, and flood risks.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Cost, technical skill, monitoring, and awareness.
- **Global Context:** Earthquake-prone countries like Japan and Nepal enforce strict codes to reduce fatalities.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“Earthquake-resistant building codes exist but face challenges in implementation in high-risk Himalayan zones.”

Analyse the factors delaying adoption and suggest measures to enhance compliance and resilience.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding building codes in Himalayan regions:

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the challenges in implementing earthquake-resistant building codes in Himalayan regions of India.
- Discuss technical, economic, and administrative barriers, and suggest strategies to ensure safer housing in high-risk areas. (150 words)



PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Himalayan building codes:

1. IS 1893 and IS 13920 guide earthquake-resistant construction.
2. High implementation costs and lack of technical expertise delay safer construction.
3. All Himalayan states strictly enforce earthquake-resistant building codes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

7. WATER & CLIMATE RESILIENCE: INDIA PLANS FOR THE FUTURE IT'S ALREADY LIVING

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India's Annual Climate Report emphasised water security as the central pillar of national climate adaptation.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Water Stress:** India is the world's third-largest water consumer; ~600 million people face water scarcity annually.
- II. **Climate Linkage:** Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and glacier retreat affect availability.
- III. **National Initiatives:**
 - A. **National Water Mission (NWM):** Focuses on integrated water resource management, demand-side efficiency, and data systems.
 - B. **Jal Jeevan Mission:** Ensures household tap connections and promotes water conservation.
 - C. **State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs):** Local adaptation measures for agriculture, urban planning, and disaster management.
- IV. **Urban Resilience:** Cities are adopting rainwater harvesting, river rejuvenation, and stormwater management to combat floods.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Groundwater Depletion:** Over 60% of aquifers are over-exploited in India.
- **Flood & Drought Risk:** Climate change increases frequency and severity, affecting millions.
- **Policy Integration:** Water and climate strategies linked to SDGs, NDCs under Paris Agreement.



- **Technology Adoption:** Remote sensing, GIS, and AI for water resource planning and climate modeling.
- **Community Participation:** Water user associations, watershed management, and local adaptation projects.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **National Water Mission (NWM):** Part of National Action Plan on Climate Change; aims for water use efficiency and conservation.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):** Provides safe tap water to rural households and promotes water stewardship.
- **Climate Resilience Measures:** Flood management, drought mitigation, sustainable agriculture, urban stormwater planning.
- **Water Stress Indicators:** Per capita availability $<1,700 \text{ m}^3/\text{year}$ = water-stressed; $<1,000 \text{ m}^3/\text{year}$ = water-scarce.
- **Global Context:** India ranks 120th out of 122 countries in water quality and availability indicators (UN World Water Development Report).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding India's water and climate initiatives:
 1. The National Water Mission focuses on water conservation and efficiency.

2. Jal Jeevan Mission aims to provide tap water to rural households.
 3. Climate resilience in India only involves urban infrastructure projects.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**
"Water and climate resilience are crucial for India's sustainable development."
Discuss the challenges and policy measures adopted to ensure water security and climate adaptation in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine India's strategies for water security and climate resilience.
- Discuss challenges such as groundwater depletion, floods, and droughts, and suggest measures for sustainable water management and community-based adaptation. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding water and climate resilience in India:

1. The National Water Mission promotes water conservation and efficiency.



2. Jal Jeevan Mission focuses on rural water supply and management.
3. Climate resilience efforts are limited to urban areas only.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

8. EARLY SUMMER 2026: WINTER RAINS WENT MISSING — AND SO DID OUR COMFORT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India experienced early onset of summer due to below-normal western disturbances in winter 2025–26.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Winter Rains:** Primarily Western Disturbances bring rainfall to northwestern India during December–February.
- II. **Deficiency Causes:** Weak or delayed Western Disturbances, El Niño influences, and global climate variability.
- III. **Impact:**

- A. **Agriculture:** Reduced soil moisture affects rabi crops such as wheat, mustard, and pulses.
- B. **Water Resources:** Groundwater recharge and reservoirs are below average.
- C. **Heat Stress:** Early summer temperatures rise faster, affecting human health and energy demand.

- IV. **Climatic Link:** Extreme weather events are increasingly linked to global warming and climate change.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Regional Deficit:** States like Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, and Telangana recorded 20–40% below-average winter rainfall.
- **Early Heatwaves:** Maximum temperatures crossed seasonal averages by 2–4°C in some regions.
- **Agriculture Concerns:** Rabi crop sowing delayed; crop yield predictions revised downward.
- **Water Stress:** Reduced groundwater recharge and reservoir levels; irrigation requirements rise.
- **Policy Response:** IMD (India Meteorological Department) issued early warnings; state governments advised water and crop management measures.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Western Disturbances:** Extra-tropical storms bringing winter rainfall to northwestern India.



- **Rabi Crops:** Sown in winter; harvested in spring (e.g., wheat, barley, mustard).
- **Meteorological Alerts:** Heatwave, drought, and rainfall deficiency warnings issued by IMD.
- **Climatic Indicators:** El Niño, La Niña, and Indian Ocean Dipole affect rainfall patterns.
- **Water Management:** Winter rains are critical for groundwater recharge in north and central India.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding Western Disturbances in India:
 1. They bring winter rainfall to northwestern India.
 2. They originate over the Bay of Bengal.
 3. They influence rabi crop productivity.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
"Erratic winter rains affect agriculture, water security, and livelihoods in India."
Discuss the causes and implications of deficient winter rainfall and early summer heatwaves in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the impact of deficient winter rainfall in India during early 2026.
- Discuss the consequences on agriculture, water resources, and heatwave risks, and suggest adaptive strategies for climate-resilient planning. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding winter rains in India:

1. Western Disturbances bring rainfall primarily to northwestern India during winter.
2. Deficient winter rains can affect rabi crop yields and groundwater recharge.
3. Winter rains originate mainly from the Bay of Bengal and coastal Odisha.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



9. HIMACHAL HEATWAVE: 10°C ABOVE NORMAL — THIS IS NOT WEATHER, IT'S A WARNING

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Himachal Pradesh recorded temperatures 10°C above seasonal normal in March 2026, triggering a heatwave alert.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Himalayan Climate:** Generally moderate with cool summers; recent anomalies are linked to shifting jet streams, reduced snow cover, and global warming.
- II. **Heatwaves in India:** Defined by IMD as temperatures $\geq 40^{\circ}\text{C}$ (plains) or $\geq 37^{\circ}\text{C}$ (hilly regions) sustained over two or more days.
- III. **Impacts:**
 - A. **Agriculture:** Early snowmelt and heat stress threaten horticultural crops like apples, peaches, and vegetables.
 - B. **Health:** Increased risk of heatstroke, dehydration, and respiratory stress.
 - C. **Energy:** Rising electricity demand for cooling; strain on hydropower and grids.
- IV. **Policy Context:** State disaster management authorities coordinate with IMD to issue early warnings and mitigation measures.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Temperature Anomaly:** Up to 10°C above normal in districts like Shimla, Kullu, and Mandi.
- **Agricultural Stress:** Early heat affects rabi crop maturation and orchard yields.
- **Tourism Impact:** Peak tourist season may face health risks and water scarcity.
- **Public Health Advisory:** Hydration, reduced outdoor activity, and vulnerable population monitoring.
- **Climate Signal:** Indicative of increasing frequency and intensity of extreme heat events in Himalayan regions.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Heatwave Definition (IMD):** Prolonged period of abnormally high temperatures exceeding normal by $\geq 4.5-6^{\circ}\text{C}$.
- **Vulnerable Crops:** Apples, stone fruits, vegetables, and wheat in hilly regions.
- **Disaster Preparedness:** Early warning systems, public advisories, water and electricity management.
- **Climate Change Linkage:** Rising global temperatures, glacial retreat, and altered monsoon patterns.
- **Global Context:** Himalayan heatwaves mirror trends seen in mountain regions worldwide (Andes, Alps).



PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding heatwaves in India:

1. IMD defines heatwaves based on temperature deviation from normal and duration.
2. Himalayan regions are generally immune to heatwaves.
3. Heatwaves can affect agriculture, health, and energy demand.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“Rising heat extremes in Himalayan regions pose ecological, social, and economic challenges.”

Analyse the causes, impacts, and adaptive measures to manage heatwave risks in mountainous areas.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the recent heatwave in Himachal Pradesh, highlighting its causes, consequences on agriculture, health, and energy, and suggest mitigation strategies to enhance climate resilience in Himalayan states. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding heatwaves in Himalayan regions:

1. They are defined by IMD based on temperature anomaly and duration.
2. Himalayan states are immune to extreme heat due to high altitude.
3. Heatwaves affect agriculture, public health, and energy demand.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

10. OPERATION OF SAMARIUM-COBALT MAGNET PLANT IN VISAKHAPATNAM

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- The plant focuses on producing **high-temperature resistant permanent magnets** using rare earth elements.
- It supports India's push for **Atmanirbhar Bharat in critical technologies**.



- SmCo magnets are vital for **defence, aerospace, EVs, and renewable energy systems.**

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Rare Earth Elements (REEs):**
 - A. Strategic minerals used in advanced technologies.
- II. **Samarium-Cobalt Magnets:**
 - A. Known for high magnetic strength and thermal stability.
- III. **Institutional Role:**
 - A. Developed by Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and allied agencies.
- IV. **Strategic Need:**
 - A. Reduce dependence on imports (especially from China).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Strategic Autonomy:** Reduces reliance on foreign supply chains for critical materials.
- **High Performance:** SmCo magnets operate at high temperatures and corrosive environments.
- **Defence Applications:** Used in missiles, radars, and aerospace systems.
- **Clean Energy Link:** Essential for wind turbines and electric vehicles.
- **Industrial Growth:** Boosts domestic manufacturing and technology capability.

PadhAI PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Samarium (Sm):** Rare earth element.
- **Cobalt (Co):** Transition metal used in alloys and batteries.
- **Permanent Magnets:** Retain magnetism without external power.
- **REE Significance:** Critical for electronics, defence, and green tech.
- **India's REE Source:** Monazite sands (Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu).

PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding rare earth elements:

 1. They are critical for modern electronics and defence technologies.
 2. India has no reserves of rare earth elements.
 3. They are important for renewable energy technologies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"Critical minerals are essential for technological and strategic autonomy."

Discuss the importance of rare earth elements and related technologies in India's economic and security framework.



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Analyse the significance of the Samarium–Cobalt magnet plant in India.
- Discuss its role in achieving technological self-reliance, strengthening defence capabilities, and supporting the clean energy transition. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Samarium–Cobalt magnets:

1. They are high-performance permanent magnets.
2. They can operate at high temperatures.
3. They have no application in defence or renewable energy sectors.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



Subject

Environment & Ecology



1. 9 CHEETAHS LAND IN KUNO: AFRICA'S GIFT TO INDIA'S GRASSLANDS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Nine cheetahs translocated from Botswana to Kuno National Park, taking India's total to 34 since 2022.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Historical Range:** Cheetahs were once found in dry and open forests of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.
- II. **Extinction Causes:** Overhunting, habitat fragmentation, prey depletion, and human-wildlife conflict.
- III. **Project Cheetah:**
 - A. Launched to reintroduce African cheetahs to Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary.
 - B. Involves habitat assessment, prey base restoration, and continuous monitoring.
- IV. **Significance:** Enhances ecological balance, promotes eco-tourism, and strengthens India-Africa conservation collaboration.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Translocation:** Nine cheetahs airlifted from Namibia and South Africa.
- **Habitat Preparedness:** Kuno National Park has been restored with

grasslands, prey species, and fencing to minimize conflict.

- **Monitoring:** GPS collars and camera traps for tracking health, behavior, and adaptation.
- **Ecological Impact:** Predators like cheetahs help regulate herbivore populations, supporting biodiversity.
- **International Collaboration:** Conservation expertise, genetic diversity management, and scientific protocols shared by African partners.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Scientific Name:** *Acinonyx jubatus*.
- **Indian Habitat:** Historically dry forests and open grasslands in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.
- **Conservation Status:** Vulnerable (IUCN), extinct in India since 1952.
- **Project Cheetah:** Managed by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
- **Key Prey:** Chinkara, Blackbuck, Nilgai, and other medium-sized herbivores.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding cheetah reintroduction in India:

 1. Cheetahs were declared extinct in India in the mid-20th century.



2. Kuno National Park has been prepared with adequate prey and habitat restoration.
3. Only indigenous Asiatic cheetahs are being reintroduced to India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

• **Mains PYQ:**

“Reintroduction of apex predators can restore ecological balance and biodiversity.”

Discuss the significance, challenges, and expected ecological outcomes of reintroducing cheetahs in India.

2. African cheetahs are being translocated, not Asiatic cheetahs.
3. Habitat restoration and prey base enhancement are integral to Project Cheetah.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: D

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the reintroduction of African cheetahs to Kuno National Park.
- Discuss ecological, conservation, and socio-economic implications, and highlight measures required for long-term survival and human-wildlife coexistence. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding cheetah reintroduction in India:

1. Cheetahs are being reintroduced in Kuno National Park after extinction in India.

2. INDIA'S ENVIRONMENT REPORT CARD: MORE RED MARKS THAN GREEN ONES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- MoEFCC released State of Environment report highlighting air, water, and forest degradation trends.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Environmental Indicators:** Air quality (PM2.5 levels), water quality, forest cover, biodiversity indices, greenhouse gas emissions.
- II. **Key Findings:**
 - A. Urban air pollution exceeds WHO safe limits in over 100 cities.
 - B. Groundwater depletion and river pollution affect millions.



- C. Biodiversity hotspots face habitat fragmentation and poaching pressures.
- III. **Policy Context:** National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs), and sectoral environmental regulations aim to mitigate impacts.
- IV. **Global Rankings:** India ranks low on Environmental Performance Index (EPI) despite progress in renewable energy and afforestation.

- **Biodiversity Hotspots in India:** Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Sundalands, Western Ghats, Nicobar Islands.
- **Global Linkage:** Environmental Performance Index (EPI) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) monitoring.
- **Policy Instruments:** NAPCC, SAPCCs, Environment Protection Act 1986, Forest Conservation Act 1980, Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Air Pollution:** Over 130 cities exceed safe PM_{2.5} limits; major health impacts.
- **Water Stress:** ~600 million people face high water stress; rivers polluted due to untreated sewage and industrial effluents.
- **Forest Cover:** Incremental increase reported, but forest quality and biodiversity under pressure.
- **Biodiversity Threats:** Habitat loss, poaching, and invasive species impact species survival.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Extreme weather events (heatwaves, floods, droughts) increasingly frequent.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Air Quality:** PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ critical indicators; WHO safe PM_{2.5} <10 µg/m³.
- **Water Stress Index:** Annual per capita availability <1,700 m³ = water-stressed; <1,000 m³ = water-scarce.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding India's environmental challenges:
 1. India faces critical air and water pollution in urban and rural areas.
 2. Forest cover increase automatically indicates improved biodiversity health.
 3. The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) addresses climate mitigation and adaptation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
"India's environmental indicators show progress in some areas but deterioration in others."
Critically examine the current state of India's environment and discuss measures needed for sustainable development.



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Evaluate India's environmental report card in terms of air and water quality, forest and biodiversity health, and climate vulnerability.
- Discuss key policy gaps and suggest strategies for improving ecological sustainability and achieving SDG targets. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding India's environment:

1. India faces severe air and water pollution challenges in multiple regions.
2. Increase in forest cover always reflects improved biodiversity health.
3. NAPCC provides a framework for climate mitigation and adaptation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

3. COCONUT FARMING GOES SUSTAINABLE: SMALL CROP, BIG CLIMATE IDEA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Coconut Development Board promoted climate-smart coconut farming as a model for sustainable tropical agriculture.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Major States:** Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal.
- II. **Challenges:**
 - A. Water scarcity and erratic monsoons.
 - B. Pest infestations (e.g., rhinoceros beetle, red palm weevil).
 - C. Soil fertility decline and monoculture issues.
- III. **Sustainable Measures:**
 - A. Drip irrigation and micro-irrigation to conserve water.
 - B. Organic manures and bio-pesticides.
 - C. Intercropping with spices, vegetables, and fruit trees.
 - D. Use of coconut biomass for bioenergy.
- IV. **Policy Support:** Coconut Development Boards (Central and State) provide training, subsidies, and technological support.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Water Efficiency:** Drip irrigation reduces water use by 40–60% in coconut plantations.
- **Organic Farming:** Reduces chemical input, protects soil, and improves long-term productivity.
- **Climate Mitigation:** Biomass use and carbon sequestration potential contribute to climate action goals.
- **Income Diversification:** Intercropping enhances farmer resilience to price and climate fluctuations.
- **Technology Adoption:** Smart farming tools, mobile apps, and soil testing improve yield and sustainability.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Scientific Name:** *Cocos nucifera*.
- **Major Uses:** Food, oil, coir, biofuel, cosmetics, and handicrafts.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Drip irrigation, organic inputs, intercropping, pest management.
- **Policy Support:** Coconut Development Board (Central) and state-level schemes.
- **Global Relevance:** Coconut farming contributes to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements

regarding sustainable coconut farming in India:

1. Drip irrigation enhances water-use efficiency in coconut plantations.
2. Intercropping reduces biodiversity in coconut farms.
3. Coconut biomass can contribute to renewable energy production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“Sustainable farming practices in coconut cultivation can mitigate climate risks and improve farmer income.”

Discuss the methods, benefits, and challenges of implementing sustainable coconut farming in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the role of sustainable practices in coconut cultivation in India.
- Discuss water management, organic farming, intercropping, and biomass use, highlighting their benefits for climate resilience, productivity, and farmer livelihoods. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding sustainable coconut farming in India:



1. Drip irrigation and organic inputs enhance sustainability and productivity.
2. Intercropping with vegetables or spices reduces biodiversity on coconut farms.
3. Coconut biomass can be used for bioenergy and climate mitigation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

4. 204 OF 238 CITIES FAIL AIR QUALITY — THE AIR WE BREATHE IS BARELY LEGAL

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- CPCB data showed 204 cities failed to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards in 2025.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Air Quality Standards:** NAAQS define safe limits for PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀, NO_x, SO₂, CO, and O₃ to protect human health.
- II. **Health Impacts:** Respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases, reduced life expectancy, and increased hospitalizations.

III. Major Contributors:

- A. Vehicular emissions in dense urban areas.
- B. Industrial emissions and power plants.
- C. Biomass and crop residue burning in surrounding regions.
- D. Dust from construction and unpaved roads.

- IV. **Policy Measures:** National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), vehicle emission standards (Bharat Stage VI), and promotion of renewable energy.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **City Performance:** Only 34 out of 238 cities met NAAQS for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀.
- **High Pollution Hotspots:** Delhi, Ghaziabad, Kanpur, Varanasi, Ludhiana consistently show “severe” levels.
- **Public Health Risk:** Air pollution causes ~1.67 million deaths annually in India (Global Burden of Disease).
- **Regulatory Gap:** NCAP targets 20–30% reduction in PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ by 2024–25, but enforcement remains inconsistent.
- **Mitigation Efforts:** Adoption of electric vehicles, industrial emission control, urban green cover, and public awareness campaigns.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Pollutants Monitored:** PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀, NO_x, SO₂, CO, O₃.



- **NAAQS Limits:** PM_{2.5} (annual mean $\leq 40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, 24-hr $\leq 60 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), PM₁₀ (annual $\leq 60 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, 24-hr $\leq 100 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).
- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):** Launched 2019; aims to reduce particulate pollution by 20–30% by 2024–25.
- **Key Causes:** Transport, industry, biomass burning, construction dust.
- **Health Impacts:** Respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular disease, stroke, premature deaths.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding air pollution in India:
 1. PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ are key indicators of air quality.
 2. Urban air pollution has a negligible impact on public health in India.
 3. The National Clean Air Programme aims to reduce particulate matter levels in cities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
“Air pollution in Indian cities is a major public health and environmental challenge.”
Examine the causes, impacts, and policy measures for improving urban air quality in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically analyse the state of urban air quality in India, highlighting major sources of pollution, public health implications, and measures under NCAP and other initiatives to achieve cleaner air.
- Suggest strategies for sustainable long-term improvements. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding urban air quality in India:

1. PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ are critical indicators of air pollution levels.
2. The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) aims to reduce particulate pollution in cities.
3. Urban air pollution in India has minimal impact on public health.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



5. PLASTIC IN EARTH'S FUTURE: WE'RE BUILDING PYRAMIDS — MADE OF WASTE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Study projected plastics will form fossil-like geological layers, marking a distinct Anthropocene signature.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Global Plastic Production:** Over 400 million tonnes annually; only ~9% effectively recycled.
- II. **Environmental Impacts:**
 - A. Oceans and rivers act as sinks, affecting marine life.
 - B. Microplastics contaminate soil and water, impacting agriculture and food safety.
 - C. Greenhouse gas emissions from plastic production contribute to climate change.
- III. **Policy Measures in India:**
 - A. Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (amended 2021) promote reduction, segregation, and extended producer responsibility (EPR).
 - B. State-level bans on single-use plastics.
- IV. **Global Context:** UN Environment Programme and initiatives like "Break Free from Plastic" advocate for reduction and circular economy solutions.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Waste Accumulation:** Landfills increasingly resemble "plastic pyramids" due to low biodegradability.
- **Recycling Gap:** Only a fraction of plastic waste is recycled; much ends up in soil, rivers, and oceans.
- **Health Risk:** Microplastics found in drinking water, seafood, and agricultural soils.
- **Economic Impact:** Plastic pollution affects fisheries, tourism, and municipal waste management budgets.
- **Mitigation Efforts:** Circular economy, bioplastics, bans on single-use plastics, and consumer awareness campaigns.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Plastic Types:** PET, HDPE, LDPE, PVC, PP, PS – vary in recyclability.
- **Plastic Waste Management Rules (India):** Mandate source segregation, recycling, and EPR for producers.
- **Microplastics:** Plastic particles <5mm that contaminate water, soil, and food chains.
- **Global Impact:** Oceans contain ~150 million tonnes of plastic; projected to triple by 2050.
- **Sustainable Solutions:** Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, ban single-use plastics, promote bio-based alternatives.



PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding plastic pollution:

1. Microplastics can enter the human food chain.
2. Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, promote producer responsibility and recycling.
3. All plastics are biodegradable and do not persist in the environment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Plastic pollution is a silent crisis threatening ecosystems, human health, and climate stability."

Analyse the causes, consequences, and policy measures addressing plastic waste management in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the growing plastic pollution challenge in India.
- Discuss sources, environmental and health impacts, and policy initiatives, including waste segregation, recycling, and circular economy measures, to ensure sustainable management. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding plastic pollution in India:

1. Microplastics can enter the food chain and affect human health.
2. Plastic Waste Management Rules (2016) include extended producer responsibility.
3. All plastics are biodegradable and do not persist in the environment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

6. CLIMATE SCIENCE CREDIBILITY: IT'S NOT OPINION. IT'S EVIDENCE.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- IPCC released updated findings reinforcing scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change ahead of COP30.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Scientific Evidence:**



- A. IPCC reports provide comprehensive assessments of climate impacts, adaptation, and mitigation.
 - B. Meteorological data show India's average temperature has increased by $\sim 0.7^{\circ}\text{C}$ in the last century.
 - C. Extreme rainfall and drought events are becoming more frequent.
- II. **Policy Response:**
- A. NAPCC and State Action Plans (SAPCCs) guide mitigation and adaptation.
 - B. Renewable energy adoption, afforestation, and sustainable agriculture are key interventions.
- III. **Global Context:** Climate change denial has been countered by overwhelming peer-reviewed evidence and intergovernmental consensus.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Temperature Trends:** India's average surface temperature rising, with higher warming in northern plains and Himalayan regions.
- **Extreme Events:** Increase in cyclones, floods, droughts, and heatwaves.
- **Glacial Retreat:** Himalayan glaciers losing mass, affecting river flow and water security.
- **Sea-Level Rise:** Threat to coastal ecosystems, cities, and agriculture.
- **Policy Implications:** Evidence-based strategies for climate-resilient

infrastructure, disaster management, and sustainable development.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **IPCC:** Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; assesses climate change science, impacts, and policy.
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Launched 2008; includes missions on solar energy, energy efficiency, water, and sustainable habitat.
- **State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs):** Localized adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- **Indicators:** Temperature rise, precipitation variability, glacial retreat, sea-level rise, frequency of extreme events.
- **Global Commitments:** Paris Agreement, Net-Zero targets, SDG 13 (Climate Action).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding climate change evidence:
 1. Scientific assessments indicate rising temperatures and extreme weather events globally and in India.
 2. Climate change evidence is mostly anecdotal and lacks empirical verification.
 3. NAPCC is India's primary policy framework for climate



mitigation and adaptation.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

● **Mains PYQ:**

“Evidence-based climate science is central to policy formulation in India.”
Analyse India’s climate vulnerabilities and discuss how scientific evidence informs mitigation and adaptation strategies.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the credibility of climate science in India.
- Discuss evidence of rising temperatures, extreme weather events, glacial retreat, and sea-level rise, and evaluate how scientific data informs national and state climate policies. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding climate science and policy in India:

1. Evidence shows India is experiencing rising temperatures and increased extreme events.
2. Climate change evidence is anecdotal and unreliable.
3. NAPCC provides a framework for climate mitigation and adaptation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

7. BELÉM FOREST FINANCE: CAN MONEY FINALLY SAVE THE TREES?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- COP30 at Belem, Brazil to test new tropical forest finance framework linking payments to verified conservation.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Amazon Significance:** Houses ~10% of global biodiversity, acts as a carbon sink, and regulates regional and global climate.
- II. **Deforestation Drivers:** Logging, agriculture, mining, and infrastructure development.
- III. **Forest Finance Mechanisms:**
 - A. **REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation):** Rewards countries or communities for preserving forests.
 - B. **Green Bonds:** Funds raised for environmental projects including afforestation.



C. **Payment for Ecosystem**

Services: Incentivizes local populations to maintain forest cover.

IV. **Global Lessons:** Countries like Brazil, Costa Rica, and India are experimenting with forest finance to link conservation with economic benefits.

climate, biodiversity, and indigenous communities.

- **India Relevance:** Forest finance models inform REDD+ pilot projects, afforestation schemes, and climate action plans.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Carbon Credits:** Forest conservation generates tradable credits for carbon sequestration.
- **Community Incentives:** Local communities receive income for sustainable forest management.
- **Biodiversity Protection:** Reduced deforestation preserves flora, fauna, and ecosystem services.
- **Climate Mitigation:** Forest finance contributes to global greenhouse gas reduction goals.
- **Policy Challenges:** Ensuring transparency, preventing leakage, and measuring real impact remain critical.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **REDD+:** UN-supported mechanism to financially reward forest conservation.
- **Green Bonds:** Debt instruments used to finance climate and environmental projects.
- **Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES):** Incentivizes local actors to conserve natural resources.
- **Amazon Rainforest:** Critical for global carbon balance; deforestation affects

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding forest finance mechanisms:
 1. REDD+ incentivizes reduced deforestation through carbon credit trading.
 2. Green bonds are used to raise funds for environmental projects.
 3. Forest finance has no role in climate mitigation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
"Forest finance can create a win-win for climate mitigation and local livelihoods."
Discuss the mechanisms, benefits, and challenges of using financial tools to conserve forests in India and globally.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the role of forest finance in conservation and climate mitigation.
- Discuss instruments like REDD+, green bonds, and payments for ecosystem



services, highlighting their effectiveness, challenges, and relevance for India's forest and climate policies. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding forest finance:

1. REDD+ provides incentives for reducing deforestation through carbon credit mechanisms.
2. Green bonds can fund afforestation and conservation projects.
3. Forest finance has no impact on biodiversity or climate mitigation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

8. FOREST SURVEY'S AI ALERTS SILENCED: WHO TURNED OFF THE DEFORESTATION ALARM?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Forest Survey of India discontinued its AI-based fortnightly deforestation alerts to state governments.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Forest Survey of India (FSI):** Conducts biennial forest cover assessments using remote sensing and geospatial technology.
- II. **AI & Remote Sensing:** Enables near real-time alerts for deforestation, encroachments, and forest degradation.
- III. **Importance of Monitoring:**
 - A. Rapid detection helps enforce forest laws.
 - B. Supports India's commitments under REDD+, Paris Agreement, and National Forest Policy.
- IV. **Challenges:** Technical glitches, funding limitations, and integration with local enforcement agencies.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Technology Dependence:** AI-driven alerts complement field inspections but require constant calibration and updates.
- **Deforestation Trends:** India faces localized deforestation due to urban expansion, agriculture, and infrastructure projects.
- **Governance Impact:** Delay in alerts can weaken enforcement of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- **Biodiversity Risk:** Habitat loss threatens flora, fauna, and ecosystem services.
- **Policy Implications:** Strengthening AI monitoring, data transparency, and community involvement is critical.



PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Forest Survey of India (FSI):**
Autonomous organization under MoEFCC, conducts India State of Forest Reports (ISFR).
- **Remote Sensing & AI:** Satellite imagery and machine learning detect deforestation, encroachment, and forest degradation.
- **Key Legislations:** Forest Conservation Act 1980, Wildlife Protection Act 1972, National Forest Policy 1988.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** Forests mitigate climate change by absorbing CO₂; real-time monitoring supports NDC targets.
- **Global Relevance:** AI-based forest monitoring aligns with REDD+ and international climate commitments.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding forest monitoring in India:
 1. FSI uses satellite imagery to monitor forest cover and changes.
 2. AI and remote sensing can help detect illegal logging in near real-time.
 3. Forest monitoring has no role in climate change mitigation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**
"Technology-driven forest monitoring is key to India's forest conservation and climate goals."
Discuss the role of AI, remote sensing, and geospatial tools in forest governance, highlighting challenges and solutions.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the use of AI and satellite-based monitoring in tracking deforestation in India.
- Discuss the benefits, challenges, and policy measures required to strengthen forest governance, biodiversity protection, and climate mitigation. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding AI-based forest monitoring in India:

1. FSI uses satellite imagery and AI to monitor forest cover changes.
2. AI alerts can detect illegal logging in near real-time.
3. Forest monitoring has no impact on climate mitigation or biodiversity conservation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?



Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

9. HALF THE WORLD'S MIGRATORY WILDLIFE IS DECLINING — ON OUR WATCH

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- UNEP report found over 50% of species under CMS (Convention on Migratory Species) are in decline.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Importance of Migratory Species:**
 - A. Pollination, seed dispersal, pest control, nutrient cycling.
 - B. Cultural, recreational, and economic value through eco-tourism.
- II. **Global Threats:**
 - A. Wetland degradation and loss of stopover sites.
 - B. Overfishing and bycatch affecting marine migratory species.
 - C. Climate change altering migration timing and routes.
- III. **Policy Frameworks:**
 - A. Convention on Migratory Species (CMS, Bonn Convention).

- B. Ramsar Convention for wetlands protection.
- C. India's Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and migratory bird sanctuaries.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Population Decline:** Half of migratory species monitored globally show decreasing trends.
- **Key Threats:** Habitat loss, climate variability, hunting, pollution, and infrastructure barriers.
- **India's Role:** Stopover sites like Chilika Lake, Bharatpur Wetlands, and Pulicat Lake are critical for migratory birds.
- **Ecosystem Impact:** Declines disrupt food chains, pollination networks, and nutrient cycling.
- **Conservation Measures:** Protected areas, community-based conservation, international treaties, and sustainable land-use planning.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- I. **Migratory Species Examples in India:** Bar-headed goose, Siberian crane, Olive Ridley turtle, monarch butterflies.
- II. **Key Conventions:**
 - A. CMS (Bonn Convention) – Protects migratory species across borders.
 - B. Ramsar Convention – Conserves important wetlands for migratory birds.
- III. **Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Provides legal framework for species and habitat protection.



- IV. **Threats:** Habitat fragmentation, climate change, hunting, pollution, dams, and wind turbines.
- V. **Conservation Tools:** Wetland restoration, protected corridors, community engagement, transboundary cooperation.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding migratory species conservation:

1. Migratory species play key ecological roles such as pollination and pest control.
2. CMS (Bonn Convention) promotes conservation of migratory species across countries.
3. India has no designated sites for migratory birds.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Migratory species are essential for ecosystem balance but face growing threats globally."

Analyse the causes of decline, their ecological and socio-economic impacts, and the measures required for conservation.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the status of migratory wildlife globally and in India.
- Discuss the major threats, ecological importance, and policy initiatives including international conventions and domestic measures to ensure their protection. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding migratory wildlife:

1. Migratory species contribute to pollination, seed dispersal, and pest control.
2. Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) promotes international protection of migratory species.
3. India has no designated wetlands or sanctuaries for migratory birds.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



10. TIGER DEATHS IN MAHARASHTRA: 41 LIVES LOST AND COUNTING

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Maharashtra recorded highest tiger deaths in India in 2025, prompting NTCA review of corridor protection.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Project Tiger (1973):** Launched to protect tigers and their habitats; has increased tiger population nationally.
- II. **Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra:** Includes Tadoba-Andhari, Navegaon-Nagzira, Melghat, Pench, and Sahyadri Tiger Reserve.
- III. **Threats:**
 - A. Poaching for skin, bones, and other body parts.
 - B. Human encroachment, agriculture, and industrial development.
 - C. Inadequate prey base leading to starvation.
 - D. Disease outbreaks like canine distemper.
- IV. **Monitoring Tools:** Camera traps, GPS collars, patrols, and community reporting networks.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Mortality Causes:** Natural death, poaching, territorial fights, road and railway accidents, and disease.

- **Prey Base Issues:** Declining herbivore populations affect tiger health and survival.
- **Conservation Response:** Enhanced patrolling, awareness campaigns, veterinary interventions, and scientific autopsies.
- **Policy Implications:** Emphasizes need for stricter enforcement of Wildlife Protection Act 1972, anti-poaching units, and habitat restoration.
- **Community Engagement:** Promotes coexistence, reduces conflict, and supports eco-tourism incentives.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Scientific Name:** *Panthera tigris tigris*.
- **National Status:** Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act 1972; Endangered (IUCN).
- **Key Reserves in Maharashtra:** Tadoba-Andhari, Melghat, Pench, Navegaon-Nagzira, Sahyadri.
- **Population:** India houses ~3,000 wild tigers (~75% of global population).
- **Monitoring Techniques:** Camera traps, GPS collars, drone surveillance, and field patrols.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding tiger conservation in India:

 1. Project Tiger was launched in 1973 for tiger conservation.



2. Tigers are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.
3. Maharashtra has no designated tiger reserves.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

• **Mains PYQ:**

"Despite Project Tiger, tiger mortality continues due to natural, human, and ecological factors."

Analyse the reasons behind tiger deaths in India and discuss measures to strengthen conservation.

3. Maharashtra does not have any tiger reserves.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the recent increase in tiger deaths in Maharashtra.
- Discuss causes including poaching, habitat loss, and human-wildlife conflict, and suggest policy and community-based interventions for ensuring tiger conservation and population recovery. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding tiger conservation in India:

1. Project Tiger, launched in 1973, aims to protect tigers and their habitats.
2. Tigers are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

II.ISRO WARNS: GLACIERS ARE MELTING FASTER THAN OUR RESPONSE PLANS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- ISRO's Space Applications Centre reported accelerated melting of Himalayan glacial ice patches, raising GLOF risk.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Glacial Significance:** Source of perennial rivers, groundwater recharge, and hydroelectricity.
- II. **Observed Changes:**
 - A. Shrinking glacial mass and retreat of ice fronts.
 - B. Increased glacial lake formation, raising the risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs).
- III. **Causes:**



- A. Rising regional temperatures (0.6–1.2°C increase in last century).
 - B. Airborne pollutants like black carbon accelerating ice melt.
 - C. Land-use changes increasing local vulnerability.
- IV. **Policy Framework:** National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), Himalayan Climate Change Programme, disaster preparedness plans, and water resource management initiatives.
- **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs):** Sudden release of glacial lake water causing downstream flooding.
 - **ISRO Satellites for Monitoring:** Cartosat, RISAT, and INSAT series for remote sensing and climate monitoring.
 - **National Initiatives:** Himalayan Climate Change Programme, NAPCC, Disaster Management Act 2005.
 - **Global Relevance:** Glacial melt impacts river flows across South Asia and contributes to global sea-level rise.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Glacier Retreat Rate:** Some Himalayan glaciers receding 10–30 meters per year, with variations across regions.
- **Impact on Water Security:** Reduced river flow during lean seasons affects irrigation, drinking water, and hydropower.
- **Disaster Risk:** Rising glacial lakes increase GLOF risks in downstream communities.
- **Monitoring Tools:** ISRO satellites, remote sensing, GIS mapping, and AI-assisted modeling track glacial changes.
- **Policy Implications:** Urgent need for climate adaptation, river basin management, and regional cooperation.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Major Himalayan Glaciers:** Gangotri, Zemu, Siachen, Milam, and Chhota Shigri.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding Himalayan glaciers:

 1. Himalayan glaciers are a critical source of India's major rivers.
 2. Glacial retreat has no significant impact on downstream water security.
 3. ISRO uses satellites to monitor glacier dynamics.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"Himalayan glaciers are retreating faster than predicted, posing risks to water security and disaster preparedness."

Examine the causes, consequences, and policy measures to address accelerated glacial melting in India.



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Critically analyse the implications of accelerated Himalayan glacier retreat on India's water security, agriculture, and disaster management.
- Discuss the role of satellite monitoring, climate adaptation strategies, and policy frameworks in mitigating associated risks. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Himalayan glaciers in India:

1. They are the source of major rivers like Ganga and Brahmaputra.
2. Glacial retreat has no effect on water resources or disaster risks.
3. ISRO uses satellite technology to monitor glaciers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C



Subject

Species in News



- **CITES:** Appendix I

1. Cheetahs Shifting to Rajasthan: “Musical Chairs in the Wild”



Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Cheetah
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Acinonyx jubatus*
- III. **Family/Order:** Felidae | Carnivora
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Fastest land animal (can exceed 100 km/h)
 - B. Distinct black “tear marks” from eyes to mouth

IUCN & Legal Status (“Holy Trinity”)

- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Geographic Range

- I. **Global Distribution:**
 - A. Sub-Saharan Africa (major population)
 - B. Small remnant population in Iran (Asiatic cheetah)
- II. **India-specific Range (Reintroduction Context):**
 - A. Current Sites: Kuno National Park
 - B. Proposed/Discussion Sites:
 1. Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve
 2. Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

Eco-Behavioral Traits

- I. **Habitat Type:** Open grasslands, savannas, and semi-arid regions
- II. **Activity Pattern:** Diurnal (active during daytime, unlike most big cats)
- III. **Diet:** Medium-sized ungulates (e.g., deer, antelope)
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. Relies on speed rather than strength → low success in dense forests
 - B. Does not roar (unlike lions/tigers)
 - C. Indicator of healthy grassland ecosystems

Threat Matrix

- I. **Major Threats:**



- A. Habitat Loss (grasslands often misclassified as “wastelands”)
- B. Human–Wildlife Conflict
- C. Low Genetic Diversity (especially in reintroduced populations)
- D. Competition with larger predators (leopards, lions)
- E. Climate Stress in arid landscapes

Prelims Booster (Exam–Oriented Facts)

- India declared cheetah extinct in **1952** → reintroduced under **Project Cheetah (2022)**
- African cheetahs introduced from **Namibia & South Africa**
- Only large carnivore to go extinct in India in historical times and later reintroduced
- Requires **large, connected grassland landscapes** → key reason behind relocation discussions (“musical chairs”)

2. Mosquitoes Bit Our Ancestors 1.8 Million Years Ago They Never Left



Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Mosquito
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Anopheles*, *Aedes*, *Culex* (major genera of concern)
- III. **Family/Order:** Culicidae | Diptera
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Slender flying insect with long legs and proboscis (piercing mouthpart)
 - B. Only **female mosquitoes** feed on blood

IUCN & Legal Status (“Holy Trinity”)

- **IUCN Red List:** Not Evaluated (most species)
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Not Listed
- **CITES:** Not Listed



Geographic Range

- I. **Global Distribution:**
 - A. Found on all continents except Antarctica
- II. **India-specific Range:**
 - A. Ubiquitous across all states
 - B. High prevalence in **tropical, subtropical, and monsoon-prone regions**
 - C. Breeding hotspots: stagnant water bodies (urban + rural)

- B. Climate Change → expanding geographic range
- C. Urbanization → increased breeding sites
- D. Insecticide Resistance

Eco-Behavioral Traits

- I. **Habitat Type:** Freshwater habitats (stagnant water, puddles, containers)
- II. **Activity Pattern:**
 - A. *Anopheles* → Night (nocturnal)
 - B. *Aedes* → Day (diurnal)
- III. **Diet:**
 - A. Females: Blood meals (for egg development)
 - B. Males: Nectar
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. Vectors of major diseases → malaria, dengue, chikungunya, Zika
 - B. Highly adaptive → thrive in urban environments
 - C. Short life cycle with rapid reproduction

Threat Matrix (from human perspective)

- I. **Major Concerns:**
 - A. Disease Transmission (vector-borne diseases)

Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

- *Anopheles* → vector of **malaria**
- *Aedes aegypti* → vector of **dengue, chikungunya, Zika**
- Only **female mosquitoes bite**
- Fossil/genetic evidence suggests mosquito-human interaction dating back **~1.8 million years**
- Control strategies include **biological control, source reduction, and insecticide-treated nets**

3. Elephants Are Dying – And Humans Are Closer to the Scene Than We'd Like



Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Asian Elephant
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Elephas maximus*
- III. **Family/Order:** Elephantidae | Proboscidea
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Smaller ears than African elephants
 - B. Highly intelligent; presence of trunk with strong dexterity

II. India-specific Range:

- A. Major States: Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Odisha, West Bengal
- B. Key Landscapes:
 1. Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve
 2. Kaziranga National Park
 3. Jim Corbett National Park
- C. Distributed across **elephant corridors** connecting fragmented habitats

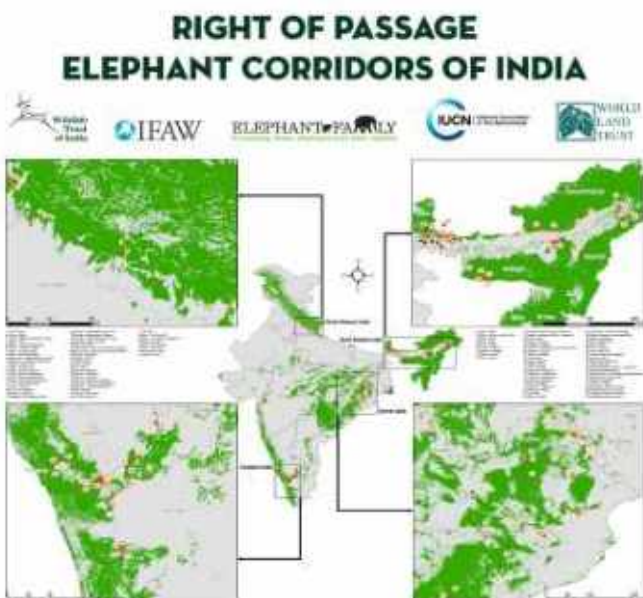
IUCN & Legal Status (“Holy Trinity”)

- **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **CITES:** Appendix I

Eco-Behavioral Traits

- **Habitat Type:** Tropical forests, grasslands, and scrublands
- **Activity Pattern:** Mostly crepuscular (active during dawn/dusk)
- **Diet:** Herbivore (grasses, bark, fruits)
- **Special Traits:**
 - **Keystone species** → shapes entire ecosystems
 - Long-distance seasonal migration using traditional corridors
 - High social intelligence; matriarchal herds
 - Ecosystem engineers (seed dispersal, forest modification)

Geographic Range



I. Global Distribution:

- A. South and Southeast Asia

Threat Matrix

I. Major Threats:

- A. Habitat Fragmentation (due to roads, railways, mining)
- B. Human-Elephant Conflict (crop raiding, retaliatory killings)
- C. Electrocution & Train Collisions



- D. Poaching (for ivory, though lower in Asian elephants due to fewer tuskers)
- E. Climate Change (affecting food & water availability)

Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

- India hosts **~60% of the world's Asian elephant population**
- Declared **National Heritage Animal of India**
- Protected under **Project Elephant (1992)**
- Presence indicates **healthy, connected forest ecosystems**
- Rising elephant deaths often linked to **anthropogenic causes (railways, power lines, habitat encroachment)**

4. 30,000 km Migration Route: Nations Unite for a Bird That Doesn't Know Borders



Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Amur Falcon
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Falco amurensis*
- III. **Family/Order:** Falconidae | Falconiformes
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Small raptor with long pointed wings
 - B. Males: dark grey; Females: speckled with white underparts

IUCN & Legal Status (“Holy Trinity”)

- **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule IV
- **CITES:** Appendix II



Geographic Range



- D. Strong example of **international conservation cooperation**

Threat Matrix

- I. **Major Threats:**
 - A. Hunting during migration (historically in Northeast India)
 - B. Habitat degradation at stopover sites
 - C. Climate Change affecting migratory timing and food availability
 - D. Light pollution and collision risks

- I. **Global Distribution:**
 - A. Breeds in **East Asia** (China, Mongolia, Russia)
 - B. Winters in **Southern Africa**
- II. **India-specific Range (Migration Stopover):**
 - A. Key Stopover Sites:
 1. Doyang Reservoir
 2. Pangti Village
 - B. Migration Corridor: Northeast India → Arabian Sea → Africa

Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

- Famous conservation success story in **Nagaland** (community-led protection)
- Tagged birds tracked via satellite → confirmed **Africa-India-East Asia flyway**
- Relies heavily on **stopover ecology** → disruption can collapse migration success
- Example of species protected through **transboundary cooperation (CMS relevance)**

Eco-Behavioral Traits

- I. **Habitat Type:** Open forests, grasslands, wetlands (during stopovers)
- II. **Activity Pattern:** Diurnal
- III. **Diet:** Insectivorous (locusts, termites), occasionally small birds
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. One of the **longest migratory routes (~30,000 km)** among raptors
 - B. Undertakes **non-stop transoceanic flight over the Arabian Sea**
 - C. Roosts in massive flocks (lakhs) during stopovers



5. Chambal's Gharials & Dolphins: SC Guards What Humans Forgot to Protect



- B. Long beak-like snout; flexible neck

IUCN & Legal Status (“Holy Trinity”)

Gharial

- **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **CITES:** Appendix I

Ganges River Dolphin

- **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **CITES:** Appendix I

Taxonomy & Identity

Gharial

- I. **Common Name:** Gharial
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Gavialis gangeticus*
- III. **Family/Order:** Gavialidae | Crocodylia
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Long, narrow snout (fish-eating adaptation)
 - B. Adult males have a bulbous growth (“ghara”) on snout

Dolphin

- I. **Common Name:** Ganges River Dolphin
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Platanista gangetica*
- III. **Family/Order:** Platanistidae | Cetacea
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Almost blind; uses echolocation

Geographic Range

- I. **Core Habitat:**
 - A. National Chambal Sanctuary
- II. **River System:**
 - A. Chambal River (tributary of Yamuna → Ganga basin)
- III. **Distribution:**
 - A. Gharial → Deep, fast-flowing rivers of North India
 - B. Dolphin → Ganga–Brahmaputra river systems

Eco-Behavioral Traits

Gharial

- I. **Habitat Type:** Deep, clean rivers with sandbanks



- II. **Activity Pattern:** Diurnal basking
- III. **Diet:** Piscivorous (fish specialist)
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. Indicator of **clean river ecosystems**
 - B. Poor terrestrial mobility → highly water-dependent

Dolphin

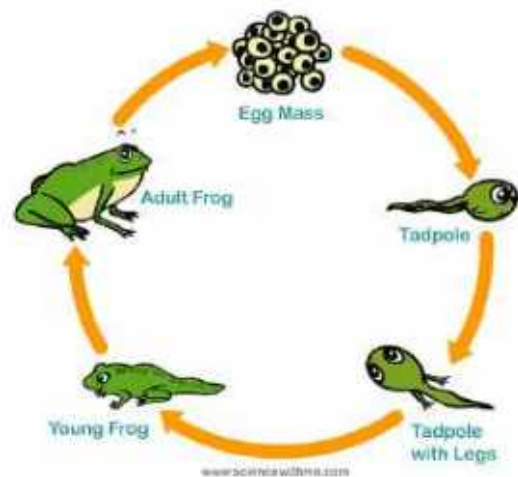
- I. **Habitat Type:** Freshwater rivers
- II. **Activity Pattern:** Mostly solitary
- III. **Diet:** Fish, crustaceans
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. India's **National Aquatic Animal**
 - B. Uses **echolocation** due to low visibility waters

Threat Matrix

- I. **Major Threats (Common):**
 - A. River Pollution (industrial + sewage)
 - B. Sand Mining (destroys nesting/breeding grounds)
 - C. Dams & Barrages (fragment habitat, disrupt flow)
 - D. Fishing Nets (entanglement deaths)
- II. **Species-specific:**
 - A. Gharial → Loss of sandbanks for nesting
 - B. Dolphin → Declining river flow & noise pollution

- National Chambal Sanctuary is a **tri-state protected riverine ecosystem**
- Gharial is **one of the longest living crocodilians** but least adapted to land
- Ganges River Dolphin declared **National Aquatic Animal (2009)**
- Both species act as **flagship indicators of river health**
- Recent focus due to **judicial intervention (Supreme Court)** on river protection

6. India's Frogs: The Unsung Indicators of an Ecosystem Under Stress



Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Frogs (Amphibians)



- II. **Scientific Name:** Multiple species (e.g., *Rana tigrina* / *Hoplobatrachus tigerinus*, *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*)
- III. **Family/Order:** Various Families | Anura
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Moist, permeable skin (dual respiration: skin + lungs)
 - B. Life cycle includes **metamorphosis** (tadpole → adult)

- I. **Habitat Type:** Freshwater wetlands, forests, grasslands
- II. **Activity Pattern:** Mostly nocturnal
- III. **Diet:** Carnivorous (insects, small invertebrates)
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. **Indicator species** → highly sensitive to environmental changes
 - B. Permeable skin makes them vulnerable to pollution
 - C. Play key role in **food chains** (both predator & prey)
 - D. Seasonal breeding linked to **monsoon cycles**

IUCN & Legal Status (“Holy Trinity”)

- I. **IUCN Red List:** Varies (Least Concern → Critically Endangered depending on species)
- II. **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:**
 - A. Some species protected (e.g., Schedule II/IV)
- III. **CITES:** Limited listing (species-specific)

Geographic Range

- I. **Global Distribution:**
 - A. Found worldwide except Antarctica
- II. **India-specific Range:**
 - A. High diversity in:
 1. Western Ghats (biodiversity hotspot)
 2. Eastern Himalayas
 - B. Also present in wetlands, forests, agricultural fields across India

Eco-Behavioral Traits

Threat Matrix

- I. **Major Threats:**
 - A. Habitat Loss (wetland destruction, deforestation)
 - B. Pollution (pesticides, industrial waste)
 - C. Climate Change (altered rainfall patterns)
 - D. Emerging Diseases (e.g., chytridiomycosis)
 - E. Invasive Species

Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

- Amphibians are considered **“bioindicators”** of ecosystem health
- Western Ghats hosts many **endemic frog species** (e.g., Purple Frog)
- Sensitive to both **terrestrial and aquatic changes** → dual vulnerability



- Decline in frog populations often signals **ecosystem stress before visible damage**
- Important for **natural pest control in agriculture**

- B. Prominent mane along the back that stands erect when threatened

7. Striped Hyena: Proposal for CMS Listing Ahead of COP15



IUCN & Legal Status (“Holy Trinity”)

- **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **CITES:** Appendix III (*India*)

Geographic Range

- I. **Global Distribution:**
 - A. North Africa, Middle East, Central Asia, and Indian subcontinent
- II. **India-specific Range:**
 - A. States: Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka
 - B. Key Landscapes:
 1. Gir National Park
 2. Ranthambore National Park
 - C. Prefers **arid and semi-arid regions**

Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Striped Hyena
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Hyaena hyaena*
- III. **Family/Order:** Hyaenidae | Carnivora
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Grey coat with black vertical stripes

Eco-Behavioral Traits

- I. **Habitat Type:** Dry scrublands, grasslands, semi-deserts
- II. **Activity Pattern:** Nocturnal
- III. **Diet:** Scavenger (carrion), occasionally hunts small animals
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. Known as **“nature’s cleaner”** → vital for ecosystem sanitation



- B. Strong jaws capable of crushing bones
- C. Solitary and shy → rarely seen

Threat Matrix

- I. **Major Threats:**
 - A. Habitat Loss & Fragmentation
 - B. Persecution due to myths and conflict with humans
 - C. Roadkills
 - D. Decline in carrion availability (changes in livestock practices)

Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

- Proposal by **Tajikistan & Uzbekistan** to include in CMS Appendices
- CMS COP15 to be held in **Campo Grande**
- Not a true predator → primarily **scavenger** (important ecological role)
- Found in **low-density populations** → difficult to monitor
- CMS listing will enhance **transboundary conservation efforts**

8. Ruddy Shelduck (Brahminy Duck): A Transboundary Winter Visitor



Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Ruddy Shelduck (Brahminy Duck)
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Tadorna ferruginea*
- III. **Family/Order:** Anatidae | Anseriformes
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Bright orange-brown body with pale head
 - B. Distinct loud, honking calls; often seen in pairs

IUCN & Legal Status ("Holy Trinity")

- **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern



- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule IV
- **CITES:** Not Listed

- A. Wetland Degradation
- B. Pollution of water bodies
- C. Disturbance from tourism
- D. Climate Change affecting migratory patterns

Geographic Range

- I. **Global Distribution:**
 - A. Central Asia, Mongolia, parts of Europe
 - B. Winters in South Asia
- II. **India-specific Range:**
 - A. Widespread winter migrant across northern and central India
 - B. Key Sites:
 1. Chilika Lake
 2. Keoladeo National Park
 3. Pong Dam Lake
 - C. Found along rivers, lakes, wetlands

Eco-Behavioral Traits

- I. **Habitat Type:** Wetlands, rivers, high-altitude lakes
- II. **Activity Pattern:** Diurnal
- III. **Diet:** Omnivorous (aquatic plants, insects, small fish)
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. Strong **pair bonding** (often seen in male-female pairs)
 - B. Migrates over **Himalayan ranges**
 - C. Often roosts on sandbanks and open shores

Threat Matrix

- I. **Major Threats:**

Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

- Also called "**Brahminy Duck**" in India
- Known for **high-altitude migration across the Himalayas**
- Frequently seen in **pairs** → **cultural symbolism in folklore**
- Indicator of **healthy wetland ecosystems**
- Common winter visitor → important for **bird census & wetland monitoring**

9. Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle: A Critically Endangered River Specialist



Taxonomy & Identity

- I. **Common Name:** Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle
- II. **Scientific Name:** *Batagur kachuga*
- III. **Family/Order:** Geoemydidae | Testudines
- IV. **Key Identification Features:**
 - A. Males develop a **bright red/orange crown on head during breeding season**
 - B. High-domed ("roofed") shell with streamlined shape for riverine life

IUCN & Legal Status ("Holy Trinity")

- **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **CITES:** Appendix I

Geographic Range

- I. **Global Distribution:**
 - A. Indian subcontinent (India, Nepal, Bangladesh – now highly restricted)
- II. **India-specific Range:**
 - A. River Systems: Ganga basin
 - B. Key Sites:
 1. National Chambal Sanctuary
 2. Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary
 - C. Prefers **deep, clean rivers with sandy banks**

Eco-Behavioral Traits

- I. **Habitat Type:** Freshwater rivers with sandbanks
- II. **Activity Pattern:** Diurnal basking
- III. **Diet:** Omnivorous (aquatic vegetation, small invertebrates)
- IV. **Special Traits:**
 - A. **Temperature-dependent sex determination** (important for conservation)
 - B. Nests on **undisturbed sandbanks**
 - C. Strong site fidelity to breeding areas

Threat Matrix

- I. **Major Threats:**
 - A. Sand Mining (destroys nesting sites)
 - B. River Pollution
 - C. Dams & Flow Regulation
 - D. Poaching (eggs and adults)
 - E. Predation on eggs due to habitat disturbance

Prelims Booster (Exam-Oriented Facts)

- One of the **most endangered freshwater turtles in the world**
- Conservation programs include **captive breeding & head-starting**
- Found mainly in **National Chambal Sanctuary**
- Breeding males show **distinct seasonal coloration (red crown)**



- Indicator of **healthy riverine ecosystems**

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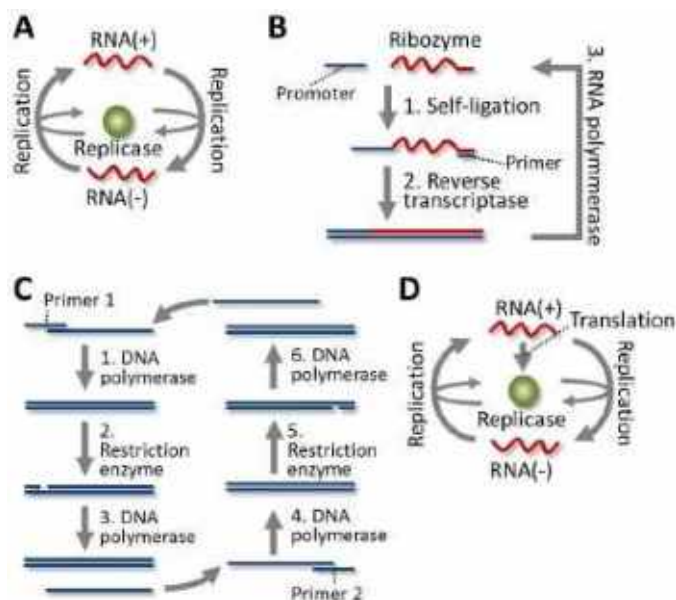


Subject

Science & Tech



1. RNA SELF-COPIES: LIFE'S ORIGIN STORY JUST GOT A THRILLING NEW CHAPTER



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Scientists demonstrated RNA can self-replicate without protein enzymes, supporting RNA World hypothesis of life's origins.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **RNA World Hypothesis:** Suggests that RNA was the first biomolecule to store genetic information and catalyze chemical reactions before DNA and proteins evolved.
- II. **Key Challenge:** Explaining how RNA could replicate without enzymes in prebiotic conditions.
- III. **Recent Breakthrough:** Laboratory experiments show RNA molecules

acting as **ribozymes** (RNA enzymes) capable of catalyzing their own replication.

IV. Scientific Significance:

- A. Explains early evolution of life.
- B. Provides insights into extraterrestrial life possibilities.
- C. Connects chemistry with biology in origin-of-life research.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Self-Replication:** RNA molecules demonstrated ability to copy sequences with minimal external assistance.
- **Dual Role:** RNA acts as both genetic material and catalyst (ribozyme function).
- **Prebiotic Relevance:** Supports possibility of life emerging from simple chemical systems on early Earth.
- **Astrobiology Link:** Strengthens search for life on planets like Mars and icy moons (Europa, Enceladus).
- **Scientific Debate:** Questions remain about stability, error rates, and environmental conditions for sustained replication.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **RNA vs DNA:** RNA is single-stranded; DNA is double-stranded and more stable.
- **Ribozymes:** RNA molecules with enzymatic activity.
- **RNA World Hypothesis:** RNA preceded DNA and proteins in evolution.



- **Origin of Life:** Abiogenesis — life emerging from non-living matter through chemical evolution.
- **Astrobiology:** Study of life beyond Earth; RNA-like molecules are key candidates.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding RNA and origin of life:

1. RNA can act as both genetic material and catalyst.
2. DNA evolved before RNA in early life forms.
3. Ribozymes are RNA molecules with enzymatic functions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“The origin of life remains one of the most complex scientific questions.”

Discuss the RNA World Hypothesis and evaluate recent scientific advances supporting it.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Explain the RNA World Hypothesis in the context of origin of life.
- Discuss how recent discoveries of RNA self-replication contribute to understanding abiogenesis and the evolution of early biological systems. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding RNA and origin of life:

1. RNA can function both as genetic material and as a catalyst.
2. RNA self-replication supports the RNA World Hypothesis.
3. DNA is believed to have evolved before RNA in early life forms.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

2. MICRON CHIP PLANT IN GUJARAT: INDIA FINALLY GETS A SEAT AT THE SILICON TABLE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- PM inaugurated Micron Technology's ATMP semiconductor facility in Sanand, Gujarat under India Semiconductor Mission.



BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Semiconductor Importance:** Chips are essential for electronics, automobiles, telecom, AI, and defense systems.
- II. **India's Dependence:** India imports nearly 100% of its semiconductor requirements.
- III. **Government Initiatives:**
 - A. Semicon India Programme (₹76,000 crore outlay).
 - B. Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for electronics manufacturing.
- IV. **Global Context:** Supply chain disruptions (e.g., COVID-19, geopolitical tensions) exposed vulnerabilities in semiconductor supply.
- V. **Project Details:**
 - A. Located in Sanand, Gujarat.
 - B. Focus on back-end semiconductor manufacturing (ATMP), not fabrication (fab).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Strategic Investment:** Over \$2.75 billion investment by Micron and Indian government support.
- **Supply Chain Integration:** Boosts domestic electronics manufacturing and reduces import dependence.
- **Job Creation:** Thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities.
- **Technology Transfer:** Enhances India's capability in semiconductor packaging and testing.
- **Limitations:** India still lacks front-end chip fabrication (fab), which is

capital-intensive and technologically complex.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **ATMP:** Assembly, Testing, Marking, Packaging – back-end semiconductor process.
- **Fab vs ATMP:** Fab = chip manufacturing; ATMP = final processing and packaging.
- **Semicon India Programme:** ₹76,000 crore scheme to promote semiconductor ecosystem.
- **Key Locations:** Gujarat emerging as semiconductor hub (Sanand cluster).
- **Global Players:** Taiwan (TSMC), South Korea (Samsung), US (Intel) dominate fabrication.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding semiconductor manufacturing:

 1. ATMP is part of back-end semiconductor processing.
 2. India currently has large-scale chip fabrication plants operational.
 3. Semiconductors are essential for electronics and digital infrastructure.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 3 only.



- Mains PYQ:**
"Semiconductors are the backbone of modern digital economies."
 Discuss India's efforts to develop a semiconductor ecosystem, highlighting challenges and opportunities.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the significance of the Micron semiconductor plant in Gujarat for India's technological self-reliance.
- Discuss the challenges in developing a full semiconductor ecosystem, including fabrication capabilities, and suggest policy measures. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding India's semiconductor sector.

- ATMP facilities are part of the semiconductor back-end process.
- India currently has multiple operational large-scale chip fabrication plants.
- Semicon India Programme aims to promote domestic semiconductor manufacturing.

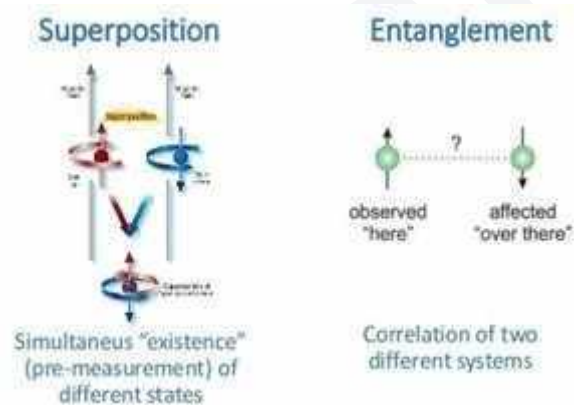
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- Options:**
A. 1 and 2 only

- B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C

3. QUANTUM COMPUTING: NO LONGER SCIENCE FICTION – WELCOME TO SCIENCE FACT



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- National Quantum Mission reached key milestone as India's first 50-qubit quantum computer entered testing phase.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Classical vs Quantum:** Classical computers use bits (0 or 1), while quantum computers use qubits (0, 1, or both simultaneously).
- Key Principles:**
 - Superposition:** Qubits exist in multiple states at once.
 - Entanglement:** Qubits are interconnected, enabling complex computations.



- III. **Recent Developments:**
- Achievements in “quantum supremacy” (Google, 2019).
 - Cloud-based quantum computing platforms by IBM.
- IV. **India’s Initiative:** National Quantum Mission (NQM) launched to develop quantum technologies in communication, computing, and sensing.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Exponential Power:** Quantum computers can solve problems exponentially faster than classical systems.
- **Cryptography Impact:** Could break current encryption systems, necessitating quantum-safe cryptography.
- **Scientific Applications:** Drug discovery, material science, weather and climate modeling.
- **Challenges:** Qubit instability (decoherence), error correction, high cost, and scalability.
- **India’s Push:** National Quantum Mission aims to develop indigenous quantum capabilities.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Qubit:** Basic unit of quantum information; can exist in superposition.
- **Superposition:** Ability to exist in multiple states simultaneously.
- **Entanglement:** Correlation between qubits regardless of distance.

- **Quantum Supremacy:** When a quantum computer performs a task impossible for classical computers.
- **India Initiative:** National Quantum Mission (₹6,000+ crore outlay).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding quantum computing:

 - Qubits can exist in multiple states simultaneously.
 - Quantum computers use classical bits for computation.
 - Quantum computing has potential applications in cryptography and drug discovery.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

“Quantum computing represents a paradigm shift in computational capabilities.”

Discuss the principles, applications, and challenges of quantum computing, and evaluate India’s preparedness in this domain.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Explain the concept of quantum computing and its underlying principles.



- Discuss its potential applications and challenges, and evaluate India's initiatives such as the National Quantum Mission in building capabilities in this field. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding quantum computing:

1. Qubits can exist in superposition, representing multiple states simultaneously.
2. Quantum computing can significantly impact cryptography and scientific research.
3. Quantum computers rely entirely on classical binary bits for computation.

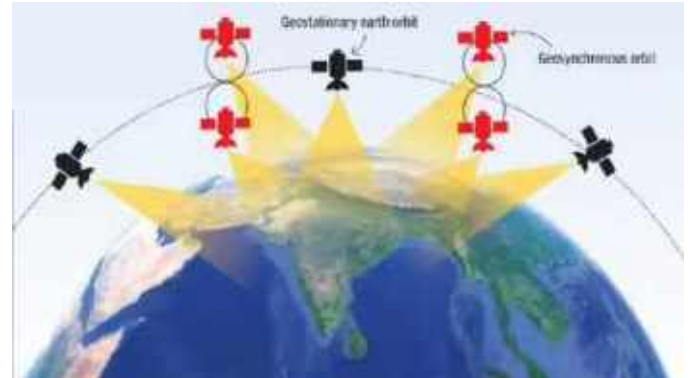
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

4. NAVIC SATELLITE FAILS: INDIA'S 'MAKE IN SPACE' DREAM HITS TURBULENCE



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- One of four operational IRNSS/NavIC satellites failed, affecting India's indigenous GPS navigation capabilities.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- NavIC System:**
 - A. Regional navigation system covering India and up to 1,500 km beyond.
 - B. Provides **Standard Positioning Service (SPS)** for civilians and **Restricted Service (RS)** for defense.
- Constellation:** Typically consists of 7 satellites (3 geostationary + 4 geosynchronous).
- Applications:** Navigation, disaster management, fleet tracking, agriculture, and military operations.
- Challenges:**
 - A. Satellite lifespan and atomic clock failures.



- B. Limited global coverage compared to GPS.
- V. **Global Systems:**
- A. GPS (USA), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (EU), BeiDou (China).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Satellite Failure:** Impacts signal continuity and reliability of NavIC services.
- **Atomic Clock Issue:** Past failures linked to onboard atomic clocks affecting accuracy.
- **Strategic Importance:** Reduces dependence on foreign systems like GPS, crucial for defense and sovereignty.
- **Modernization Need:** Integration with smartphones, expansion of constellation, and L1 frequency adoption.
- **Policy Push:** Encouraging private sector participation under India's space sector reforms.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **NavIC Full Form:** Navigation with Indian Constellation.
- **Coverage Area:** India + 1,500 km surrounding region.
- **Services:** SPS (civilian), RS (encrypted, military).
- **Frequencies:** L5 band and S-band (with newer satellites supporting L1 band).
- **Global Systems Comparison:** GPS (USA), Galileo (EU), BeiDou (China), GLONASS (Russia).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding NavIC:

1. It is India's regional satellite navigation system.
2. It provides both civilian and restricted military services.
3. It offers global coverage similar to GPS.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Indigenous satellite navigation systems are critical for strategic autonomy."

Discuss the significance, challenges, and future prospects of NavIC in India's space and defense ecosystem.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the importance of NavIC for India's strategic and civilian applications.
- Discuss the challenges posed by satellite failures and suggest measures to enhance reliability, coverage, and adoption of indigenous navigation systems. (150 words)



PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding NavIC:

1. It is a regional navigation system developed by India.
2. It provides both civilian and military navigation services.
3. It currently offers global coverage comparable to GPS.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

5. LHC DISCOVERS NEW PARTICLE: PHYSICS JUST REWROTE A PAGE OF ITS OWN TEXTBOOK

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- CERN's Large Hadron Collider detected a new subatomic particle, potentially extending the Standard Model of physics.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

I. Large Hadron Collider (LHC):

- A. Located near Geneva; accelerates particles close to the speed of light.
- B. Collisions recreate conditions similar to the early universe (just after the Big Bang).

II. Standard Model:

- A. Framework explaining elementary particles (quarks, leptons) and forces (except gravity).

III. Previous Breakthrough: Discovery of the Higgs Boson in 2012.

IV. Current Discovery:

- A. May involve exotic particles like tetraquarks, pentaquarks, or new bosons.
- B. Requires further validation through repeated experiments.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **New Particle Evidence:** Observed through high-energy collision data and statistical significance.
- **Beyond Standard Model:** Could indicate new physics such as supersymmetry or unknown forces.
- **Experimental Precision:** Advanced detectors (ATLAS, CMS) record particle decay patterns.
- **Scientific Impact:** Enhances understanding of matter, energy, and the early universe.
- **Future Research:** Further experiments needed to confirm properties and implications.



PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **CERN:** World's leading particle physics research organization.
- **LHC:** 27-km circular collider used to smash protons at high energies.
- **Standard Model:** Explains particles like quarks, leptons, bosons.
- **Higgs Boson:** Discovered in 2012; explains how particles acquire mass.
- **Exotic Particles:** Tetraquarks, pentaquarks, and possible dark matter candidates.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding particle physics:

1. The Standard Model explains fundamental particles and forces except gravity.
2. Higgs Boson is responsible for giving mass to particles.
3. LHC is used for astronomical observations of stars and galaxies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Advances in particle physics deepen our understanding of the universe."

Discuss the significance of discoveries at CERN's Large Hadron Collider and their implications for fundamental physics.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Explain the significance of recent particle discoveries at the Large Hadron Collider.
- Discuss how such findings challenge the Standard Model and contribute to our understanding of the universe, including possible implications for dark matter and fundamental forces. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding particle physics discoveries:

1. The Large Hadron Collider is used to study high-energy particle collisions.
2. The Standard Model fully explains all fundamental forces including gravity.
3. Discovery of new particles can lead to theories beyond the Standard Model.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

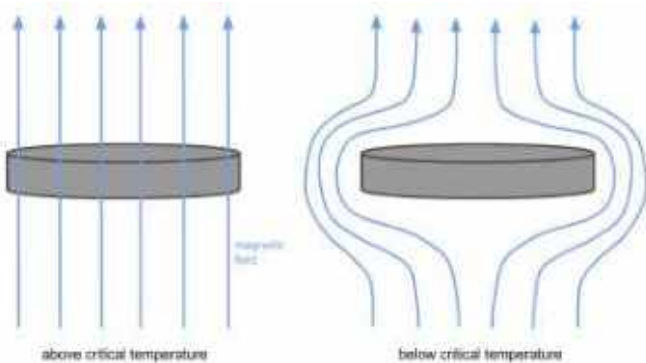
Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: C



6. SUPERCONDUCTOR TEMPERATURE RECORD BROKEN: A COOLER FUTURE GETS WARMER



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Scientists achieved superconductivity at a record near-ambient temperature,

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Superconductivity:** First discovered in 1911; occurs when electrons pair up (Cooper pairs) and move without resistance.
- II. **Types of Superconductors:**
 - A. Conventional (low-temperature, metallic).
 - B. High-temperature superconductors (ceramics like cuprates).
- III. **Recent Advances:**
 - A. Hydrogen-rich compounds (hydrides) show superconductivity at higher

temperatures under extreme pressure.

IV. **Challenges:**

- A. Requirement of very high pressure conditions.
- B. Material stability and scalability issues.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Higher Temperature Achievement:** New record significantly closer to room temperature (~20–25°C).
- **Zero Energy Loss:** Potential to revolutionize power grids by eliminating transmission losses.
- **Magnetic Applications:** Enables efficient maglev trains, MRI machines, and quantum computing systems.
- **Scientific Breakthrough:** Provides insights into electron pairing mechanisms and material science.
- **Limitations:** High-pressure requirements limit practical deployment currently.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Superconductivity:** Zero electrical resistance and expulsion of magnetic field (Meissner effect).
- **Critical Temperature (T_c):** Temperature below which material becomes superconducting.
- **Cooper Pairs:** Bound electron pairs enabling resistance-free current flow.
- **Applications:** Power grids, maglev trains, MRI, particle accelerators, quantum computing.



- **Key Challenge:** Achieving superconductivity at room temperature and normal pressure.

practical, room-temperature superconductivity for large-scale applications. (150 words)

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding superconductors:

1. Superconductors exhibit zero electrical resistance below a critical temperature.
2. The Meissner effect refers to the expulsion of magnetic fields from superconductors.
3. Superconductivity occurs only at room temperature under normal conditions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“Superconductivity has transformative potential for energy and technology sectors.”

Discuss the principles of superconductivity, recent advances, and challenges in achieving room-temperature superconductors.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding superconductors:

1. Superconductors have zero electrical resistance below a critical temperature.
2. The Meissner effect involves expulsion of magnetic fields.
3. Superconductors currently operate at room temperature and normal pressure in practical applications.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

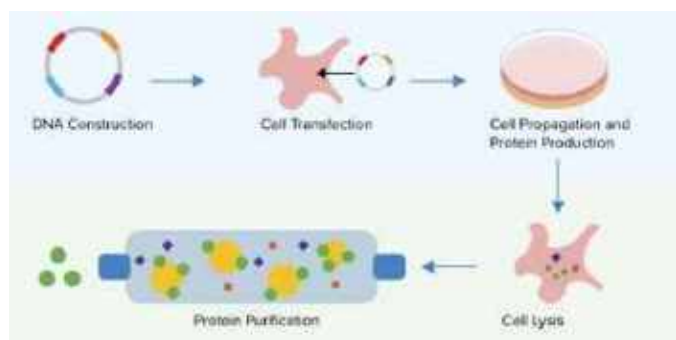
Answer: A

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Explain the concept of superconductivity and its significance. Discuss recent advancements in high-temperature superconductors and the challenges in achieving



7. BACTERIA NOW MAKE DESIGNER PROTEINS: SCIENCE DOESN'T TAKE DAYS OFF



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Scientists rewired bacterial gene circuits to synthesise custom proteins for pharmaceutical and industrial applications.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Proteins:** Essential biomolecules that perform structural, enzymatic, and regulatory functions in living organisms.
- II. **Traditional Production:** Proteins are extracted from natural sources or produced using cell cultures, which can be slow.
- III. **Synthetic Biology Approach:**
 - A. DNA sequences are designed and inserted into bacteria.
 - B. Bacteria translate genetic instructions to produce desired proteins.
- IV. **Common Organism Used:** Escherichia coli due to its rapid growth and ease of genetic manipulation.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Custom Protein Design:** Scientists can tailor protein structure and function for specific applications.
- **Scalability:** Bacteria multiply rapidly, enabling mass production.
- **Medical Applications:** Production of insulin, vaccines, antibodies, and novel therapeutics.
- **Industrial Use:** Enzymes for biofuels, food processing, and biodegradable materials.
- **Ethical & Safety Concerns:** Biosecurity risks, unintended mutations, and regulatory challenges.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Synthetic Biology:** Combines biology and engineering to design and construct new biological parts.
- **Recombinant DNA Technology:** Insertion of foreign genes into organisms to produce desired proteins.
- **Bioreactors:** Controlled systems for large-scale biological production.
- **Applications:** Medicine (vaccines, insulin), agriculture, environment (bioremediation).
- **India Context:** DBT (Department of Biotechnology) supports biotech innovation and startups.



PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding biotechnology:

1. Recombinant DNA technology allows insertion of specific genes into organisms.
2. Bacteria can be engineered to produce proteins like insulin.
3. Synthetic biology has no applications in medicine.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Biotechnology and synthetic biology are transforming modern science and industry."

Discuss the applications, benefits, and ethical concerns associated with the use of engineered organisms for protein production.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding synthetic biology:

1. Bacteria can be genetically engineered to produce specific proteins.
2. Recombinant DNA technology is used to insert desired genes into organisms.
3. Synthetic biology has no role in medical or industrial applications.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

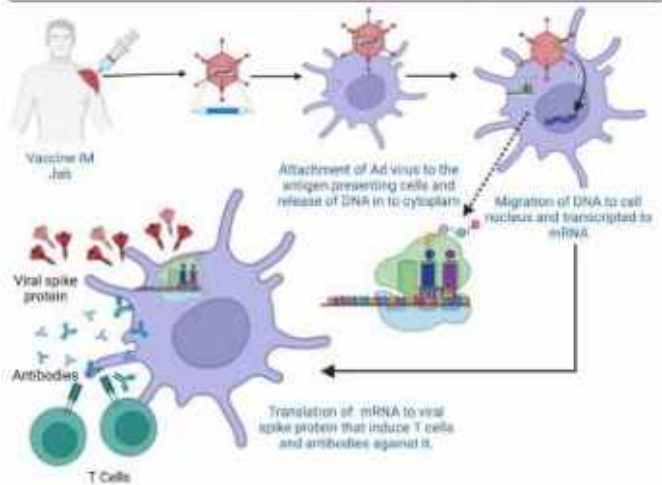
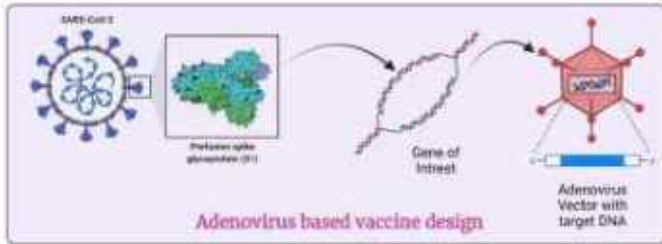
Answer: A

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Explain how synthetic biology enables bacteria to produce designer proteins.
- Discuss applications in healthcare, industry, and environment, along with ethical and regulatory challenges. (150 words)



8. COVID VACCINE & BLOOD CLOTS: THE MYSTERY SCIENCE JUST CRACKED OPEN



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Study identified the molecular mechanism behind rare blood clotting events after adenoviral COVID-19 vaccines.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Vaccines Involved:** Adenovirus vector vaccines like AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine and Covishield.
- II. **Condition (VITT):**
 - A. Rare immune reaction causing blood clots and low platelet counts.
 - B. Similar to heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT).

III. Mechanism Identified:

- A. Vaccine may trigger antibodies against platelet factor 4 (PF4).
- B. Leads to clot formation in unusual sites (e.g., brain, abdomen).

IV. Risk Context:

- A. Extremely rare (few cases per million doses).
- B. Benefits of vaccination outweigh risks significantly.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Scientific Breakthrough:** Identification of immune-trigger mechanism behind rare clotting cases.
- **Improved Safety:** Helps develop safer vaccines and screening protocols.
- **Risk Communication:** Clear evidence helps counter misinformation and vaccine hesitancy.
- **Clinical Management:** Early diagnosis and treatment protocols reduce mortality.
- **Policy Impact:** Influences vaccine guidelines, age restrictions, and informed consent processes.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **VITT:** Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia; rare but serious condition.
- **Platelet Factor 4 (PF4):** Protein involved in clotting; target of abnormal antibodies in VITT.
- **Adenovirus Vector Vaccines:** Use modified virus to deliver genetic material (e.g., Covishield).



- **mRNA Vaccines:** Different mechanisms (Pfizer, Moderna); not linked significantly with VITT.
- **Key Fact:** Risk extremely low compared to benefits of preventing severe COVID-19.

- Discuss the implications for vaccine safety, public trust, and future vaccine development. (150 words)

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding COVID-19 vaccines:

1. Adenovirus vector vaccines use modified viruses to deliver genetic material.
2. VITT is a rare immune reaction associated with some vaccines.
3. All COVID vaccines have identical mechanisms of action.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Public trust in vaccination depends on transparency and scientific evidence."

Discuss the importance of scientific understanding of vaccine side effects and its role in public health policy.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding VITT:

1. It is a rare immune reaction linked to some adenovirus-based COVID-19 vaccines.
2. It involves antibodies against platelet factor 4 leading to clot formation.
3. It occurs in a majority of vaccinated individuals.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the scientific basis of rare blood clotting events associated with certain COVID-19 vaccines.



9. ALGORITHMIC SOVEREIGNTY: INDIA'S DATA FUTURE CANNOT BE OUTSOURCED



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- NITI Aayog emphasized India must develop sovereign AI models to avoid strategic dependence on foreign algorithms.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Data as a Strategic Resource:** Often termed the “new oil,” data powers AI, digital services, and governance systems.
- II. **Concerns:**
 - A. Dependence on foreign AI models and platforms.
 - B. Lack of transparency in algorithmic decision-making.
 - C. Risks to privacy, misinformation, and digital monopolies.
- III. **Policy Measures in India:**
 - A. Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.
 - B. IndiaAI Mission and National Data Governance Framework.

C. Push for indigenous cloud, AI models, and semiconductor ecosystem.

- IV. **Global Context:** Countries like EU (GDPR), China (data localization), and US (tech dominance) shape global digital governance debates.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Data Control:** Ensuring data generated in India is governed by Indian laws.
- **AI Independence:** Development of indigenous AI models and datasets.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Strengthening privacy laws and algorithmic accountability.
- **Economic Opportunity:** Building domestic AI industry and startups.
- **Challenges:** Skill gaps, infrastructure needs, ethical concerns, and balancing innovation with regulation.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Algorithmic Sovereignty:** National control over algorithms, AI systems, and data flows.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:** Governs collection, storage, and processing of personal data in India.
- **IndiaAI Mission:** Promotes AI research, infrastructure, and innovation.
- **Data Localization:** Requirement to store data within national boundaries.
- **Global Models:** GDPR (EU), China’s data governance laws, US tech dominance.



PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding data governance in India:

1. Data localization aims to store data within national boundaries.
2. Algorithmic sovereignty involves control over AI systems and data flows.
3. India has no legal framework for personal data protection.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Data sovereignty is critical for national security and economic development."

Discuss the concept of algorithmic sovereignty and evaluate India's policy measures to achieve it.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Explain the concept of algorithmic sovereignty.
- Discuss its significance for India's digital economy, data protection, and national security, and evaluate the challenges in achieving technological self-reliance. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding algorithmic sovereignty.

1. It involves national control over data and AI systems.
2. Data localization is a component of algorithmic sovereignty.
3. It discourages domestic innovation in AI and digital technologies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

10. CASSAVA BROWN STREAK DISEASE (CBSD): A SILENT THREAT TO AFRICA'S FOOD SECURITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- CBSD is a **viral disease affecting cassava**, a staple crop for millions in Africa.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Cassava Crop:**

- A. A drought-resistant staple food widely grown in Africa.



- II. **Causative Agents:**
 - A. Viruses belonging to the genus *Ipomovirus*.
- III. **Transmission:**
 - A. Spread by whiteflies and infected planting material.
- IV. **Geographical Spread:**
 - A. East and Central Africa, expanding to new regions.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Severe Yield Losses:** Infected crops show internal root damage, reducing usability.
- **Food Security Threat:** Cassava is a primary calorie source for millions.
- **Difficult Detection:** Symptoms may not be visible externally, complicating control.
- **Vector Spread:** Whiteflies accelerate transmission across fields.
- **Need for Resistant Varieties:** Research focuses on developing disease-resistant cassava strains.

PadhAI PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Cassava:** Root crop rich in carbohydrates.
- **CBSD:** Viral disease causing root rot and necrosis.
- **Vector:** Whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*).
- **Control Measures:** Disease-free planting material, resistant varieties.
- **Global Importance:** Key staple in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia.

PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding plant diseases:

1. Some plant diseases are caused by viruses.
2. Insect vectors can transmit plant diseases.
3. All plant diseases are visible externally.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Plant diseases can significantly impact food security."

Discuss the causes, spread, and management of plant diseases with reference to Cassava Brown Streak Disease.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the impact of Cassava Brown Streak Disease on food security in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Discuss the causes, transmission mechanisms, and measures required to control its spread. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Cassava Brown Streak Disease:

1. It is caused by a virus.



2. It is transmitted by insect vectors like whiteflies.
3. It always shows visible external symptoms on crops.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

II. LPG vs LNG vs PNG vs CNG: UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR FACES OF NATURAL GAS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Highlighted amid India's push towards cleaner fuels and expansion of gas-based economy through CNG, PNG, LNG and LPG infrastructure.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- **Natural Gas:** Cleaner fossil fuel compared to coal and oil.
- **Energy Transition:** India aims to increase gas share in energy mix to ~15%.
- **Usage Diversification:** From cooking fuel to transport and industrial applications.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- I. LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas):**
 - A. **Composition:** Propane & butane.
 - B. **Storage:** Liquefied under moderate pressure.
 - C. **Use:** Household cooking (cylinders).
- II. LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas):**
 - A. **Composition:** Mostly methane.
 - B. **Storage:** Liquefied at -162°C .
 - C. **Use:** Transport over long distances, power plants.
- III. PNG (Piped Natural Gas):**
 - A. **Form:** Natural gas supplied via pipelines.
 - B. **Use:** Household cooking, commercial establishments.
 - C. **Advantage:** Continuous supply, safer than cylinders.
- IV. CNG (Compressed Natural Gas):**
 - A. **Storage:** Compressed at high pressure.
 - B. **Use:** Automobile fuel.
 - C. **Advantage:** Cleaner emissions than petrol/diesel.

PadhAI PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **LPG:** Propane + Butane; cylinder-based fuel.
- **LNG:** Methane; cryogenic storage (-162°C).
- **PNG:** Pipeline-based natural gas supply.
- **CNG:** High-pressure compressed methane for vehicles.



- **Environmental Aspect:** Lower CO₂ emissions compared to conventional fuels.

PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding natural gas:

1. CNG is used as an automobile fuel.
2. LNG is natural gas in liquefied form at very low temperatures.
3. LPG consists mainly of methane.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Natural gas is a bridge fuel in the transition to clean energy."

Discuss the role of different forms of natural gas (LPG, LNG, PNG, CNG) in India's energy security and environmental sustainability.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding gaseous fuels:

1. LPG mainly consists of propane and butane.
2. LNG is stored at extremely low temperatures in liquid form.
3. CNG is primarily used for household cooking through pipelines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Differentiate between LPG, LNG, PNG, and CNG in terms of composition, storage, and usage.
- Analyse their role in India's transition towards a cleaner energy mix. (150 words)



Subject

History, Art & Culture



1. SANITISED HISTORY: THE VERSION THAT FLATTERS POWER — AND FORGETS TRUTH

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- SC pulled up NCERT over politically motivated rewriting of history textbooks, directing reinstatement of deleted content.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Role of History:** Helps understand past events, social evolution, and policy lessons.
- II. **Institutional Framework:** Textbooks in India are developed by bodies like NCERT.
- III. **Recent Concerns:**
 - A. Removal or reduction of topics related to certain historical events.
 - B. Changes in portrayal of Mughal history, caste issues, and modern political developments.
- IV. **Global Context:** Similar debates exist worldwide regarding representation of colonialism, race, and national identity.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Selective Narratives:** Omissions may distort understanding of historical complexity.
-

- **Academic Freedom:** Scholars stress the need for evidence-based, peer-reviewed content.
- **Political Influence:** Risk of history being shaped by current power structures.
- **Educational Impact:** Limits critical thinking and analytical skills among students.
- **Balanced Approach:** Need for inclusive, multi-perspective historiography.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **NCERT:** Apex body for school curriculum and textbook development in India.
- **Historiography:** Study of how history is written and interpreted.
- **Primary vs Secondary Sources:** Original records vs interpretations.
- **Constitutional Values:** Secularism, pluralism, and scientific temper guide education policy.
- **Global Examples:** Debates on textbook revisions in the USA, Japan, and Europe.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding historiography.

 1. Historiography deals with methods and interpretations of writing history.



2. Historical narratives can change based on new evidence or perspectives.
3. History is always fixed and cannot be revised.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"History writing must balance objectivity with multiple perspectives."
Discuss the challenges of maintaining historical accuracy in the context of textbook revisions and political influence.

3. History is completely objective and cannot be influenced by social or political factors.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the concept of "sanitised history."
- Discuss its implications for education, democracy, and national identity, and suggest measures to ensure objective and inclusive historiography in India. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding history writing:

1. Historiography studies the methods and interpretation of history.
2. Historical narratives may change with new evidence or perspectives.

2. KALYAN SINGH & BABRI: A LIE THAT HISTORY REFUSED TO ARCHIVE QUIETLY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Kalyan Singh's Babri Masjid affidavit revisited amid court proceedings on accountability for 1992 demolition.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Babri Masjid Dispute:**
 - A. A long-standing religious and political conflict in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.
- II. **Role of State Government:**
 - A. The Uttar Pradesh government under Kalyan Singh had given assurances to the Supreme Court regarding protection of the site.
- III. **Event (6 December 1992):**



- A. Structure demolished by kar sevaks, leading to nationwide communal tensions.
- IV. **Aftermath:**
- A. Judicial inquiries (Liberhan Commission).
 - B. Legal proceedings culminating in the 2019 Supreme Court judgment on the Ayodhya dispute.

- **Key Principle:** Rule of law and constitutional supremacy over political considerations.
- **Federal Context:** Law and order is a State subject under the Constitution.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Constitutional Breakdown:** Failure of state machinery to uphold law and order despite judicial assurances.
- **Judicial Oversight:** Supreme Court's reliance on executive assurances raised questions of enforcement mechanisms.
- **Political Accountability:** Debate over responsibility of leadership during sensitive situations.
- **Communal Impact:** Triggered widespread unrest, affecting social harmony.
- **Institutional Lessons:** Need for stronger safeguards to uphold rule of law in conflict situations.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Babri Masjid Demolition:** Occurred on 6 December 1992 in Ayodhya.
- **Liberhan Commission:** Inquiry commission set up to investigate the demolition; submitted report in 2009.
- **Supreme Court Judgment (2019):** Awarded disputed land for Ram Temple; alternative land for mosque.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding the Babri Masjid case:

 1. The demolition took place in 1992.
 2. The Liberhan Commission was set up to investigate the incident.
 3. Law and order is a Union subject in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"The Babri Masjid demolition exposed critical challenges in India's constitutional governance."

Discuss the role of state responsibility, judicial oversight, and political accountability in the context of the event.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the constitutional and administrative lessons from the Babri Masjid demolition.
- Discuss the role of state machinery, judiciary, and political leadership in



ensuring rule of law during sensitive socio-political situations. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Babri Masjid demolition:

1. It occurred in 1992 in Ayodhya.
2. The Liberhan Commission was established to investigate the incident.
3. Law and order is a Union subject in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

3. MAHAD AT 99: THE LAKE THAT BECAME A BATTLEFIELD FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Centenary of Mahad Satyagraha (1927) observed nationally, marking Ambedkar's first assertion of Dalit right to public water.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Location:** Mahad, at the Chavdar Tank.
- II. **Social Context:**
 - A. Untouchables (Dalits) were denied access to public spaces, including water tanks.
- III. **Event (1927):**
 - A. Ambedkar led thousands of Dalits to drink water from the Chavdar Tank, asserting equal rights.
- IV. **Aftermath:**
 - A. Violent backlash from upper castes.
 - B. Burning of Manusmriti as a symbolic rejection of caste hierarchy.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Assertion of Rights:** Marked one of the first organized movements demanding civil rights for Dalits.
- **Symbolic Action:** Drinking water became a powerful act of social equality.
- **Social Reform:** Challenged deeply entrenched caste-based discrimination.
- **Constitutional Legacy:** Influenced provisions like **Article 17 (abolition of untouchability)**.
- **Continuing Relevance:** Highlights ongoing struggles for social justice and inclusion.



PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Mahad Satyagraha:** 1927 movement for Dalit access to public water.
- **Leader:** B. R. Ambedkar.
- **Key Site:** Chavdar Tank, Mahad (Maharashtra).
- **Manusmriti Burning:** Symbolic protest against caste hierarchy.
- **Constitutional Link:** Article 17 abolishes untouchability; Article 15 prohibits discrimination.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding Mahad Satyagraha:

1. It was led by B. R. Ambedkar.
2. It demanded access to public water sources for Dalits.
3. It was primarily an economic movement against land revenue.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

“Social reform movements in India were crucial in shaping constitutional values.”

Discuss the significance of the Mahad Satyagraha in the context of social justice and constitutional development.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Examine the significance of the Mahad Satyagraha in India’s social reform movement.
- Discuss its impact on the fight against caste discrimination and its influence on constitutional provisions related to equality and dignity. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Mahad Satyagraha:

1. It was led by B. R. Ambedkar to secure access to public water sources.
2. It symbolized a struggle against caste-based discrimination.
3. It was focused on agricultural reforms and taxation issues.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



4. AMBEDKAR ON UCC: HE BACKED IT — WITH A CONDITION WE KEEP FORGETTING

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Historians cited Ambedkar's Constituent Assembly speech supporting UCC but conditioned on its voluntary initial application.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Uniform Civil Code (UCC):**
 - A. Aims to replace personal laws based on religion with a common set of laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.
- II. **Constitutional Provision:**
 - A. Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy) encourages the State to secure a UCC.
- III. **Ambedkar's Position:**
 - A. Favored UCC for equality and national integration.
 - B. Suggested **optional adoption initially**, allowing communities to opt in.
- IV. **Current Debate:**
 - A. Concerns over minority rights, cultural diversity, and legal uniformity.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Conditional Support:** Ambedkar supported UCC but insisted on

gradual and voluntary implementation.

- **Equality Objective:** Aimed to eliminate discrimination, especially gender inequality in personal laws.
- **Constitutional Balance:** UCC lies in DPSP (Article 44), not enforceable like Fundamental Rights.
- **Diversity Challenge:** India's plural society requires careful balancing of reform and cultural autonomy.
- **Policy Debate:** Whether UCC should be uniform or allow flexibility for diverse practices.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 44:** Directs the State to secure a Uniform Civil Code.
- **DPSP vs Fundamental Rights:** DPSPs are non-justiciable but guide governance.
- **Personal Laws:** Govern marriage, divorce, inheritance (Hindu, Muslim, Christian laws).
- **Ambedkar's View:** Supported UCC with gradual, voluntary adoption.
- **Key Issue:** Balancing equality with religious freedom (Article 25).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding Uniform Civil Code:

 1. It is mentioned under Directive Principles of State Policy.



2. It aims to replace personal laws based on religion.
3. It is currently enforceable as a Fundamental Right.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Uniform Civil Code is a matter of debate between equality and diversity."

Discuss the constitutional position of UCC and examine Ambedkar's views on its implementation.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Discuss Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's views on the Uniform Civil Code.
- Analyse the challenges in implementing UCC in India, considering constitutional provisions, diversity, and the need for social reform. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Uniform Civil Code:

1. It is mentioned under Directive Principles of State Policy.
2. It aims to bring uniformity in personal laws across religions.
3. It is currently enforceable as a Fundamental Right in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

5. K.N. PANIKKAR: THE HISTORIAN WHO REFUSED TO LET POWER WRITE THE PAST

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Eminent Marxist historian K.N. Panikkar passed away, remembered for work on colonial history and communalism.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Who is K.N. Panikkar?**
 - A. Eminent historian specializing in modern Indian history.
 - B. Former chairman of the Kerala Council for Historical Research.
- II. **Historiographical Approach:**
 - A. Focus on **social, economic, and cultural dimensions** of history.
 - B. Critique of communal and nationalist distortions in historical narratives.
- III. **Current Relevance:**
 - A. Debates over textbook content and curriculum changes.



- B. Concerns about erosion of **academic autonomy** and institutional independence.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Evidence-Based History:** Emphasizes reliance on primary sources and scholarly research.
- **Critique of Ideology:** Opposes politicization and communalization of history.
- **Pluralism:** Advocates inclusive narratives reflecting India's diversity.
- **Academic Freedom:** Stresses autonomy of scholars and institutions.
- **Public Intellectual Role:** Engages in debates on education policy and cultural discourse.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Historiography:** Study of methods and interpretation of history.
- **Primary Sources:** Original documents, inscriptions, archival records.
- **Modern Indian History:** Focus on colonialism, nationalism, and social reform movements.
- **Institutional Bodies:** NCERT, ICHR, state research councils.
- **Key Debate:** Objectivity vs ideological influence in history writing.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding historiography.

1. It deals with the methods and writing of history.
2. Historical interpretation can change with new evidence.
3. History writing is completely free from ideological influence.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Historiography plays a crucial role in shaping collective memory and national identity."

Discuss the importance of objective and evidence-based history writing in the context of contemporary debates.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the role of historians like K.N. Panikkar in safeguarding objective historiography.
- Discuss the challenges posed by politicization of history and suggest measures to ensure academic integrity and pluralism. (150 words)



PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding historiography.

1. It involves methods and interpretation of writing history.
2. Historians rely on primary sources for evidence-based narratives.
3. History writing is always free from ideological influence.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

6. TRIBAL ARTS FEST: WHERE CULTURE BREATHES — FAR FROM THE POLICY FILES



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Aadi Mahotsav tribal arts festival opened in New Delhi showcasing crafts, music, and culture of 200+ tribes.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **India’s Tribal Diversity:** Over 700 Scheduled Tribes with distinct cultural practices.
- II. **Challenges Faced:**
 - A. Marginalization, loss of traditional knowledge, and limited market access.
- III. **Government Initiatives:**
 - A. TRIFED’s “Van Dhan Yojana” for tribal entrepreneurship.
 - B. Festivals like “Aadi Mahotsav” promoting tribal products and culture.
- IV. **Cultural Significance:**
 - A. Tribal art forms include Warli painting, Gond art, Dokra metal craft, and bamboo work.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Cultural Preservation:** Protects traditional knowledge and artistic expressions.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Provides market linkages for tribal artisans.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Tribal crafts often use eco-friendly, locally sourced materials.
- **Tourism Boost:** Cultural festivals attract domestic and international visitors.



- **Policy Integration:** Aligns with inclusive growth and “Vocal for Local” initiatives.

Discuss the role of tribal festivals in promoting cultural heritage and improving livelihoods of tribal communities.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **TRIFED:** Promotes tribal products and livelihoods.
- **Van Dhan Yojana:** Supports value addition and marketing of forest produce.
- **Aadi Mahotsav:** National tribal festival showcasing art, culture, and products.
- **Tribal Art Forms:** Warli (Maharashtra), Gond (MP), Pithora (Gujarat), Dokra craft.
- **Constitutional Provision:** Fifth and Sixth Schedules for tribal areas governance.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the role of tribal arts festivals in preserving indigenous culture and promoting economic empowerment.
- Discuss challenges faced by tribal communities and suggest measures for sustainable and inclusive development. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding tribal arts festivals:

1. They promote preservation of indigenous culture.
2. They provide economic opportunities for tribal artisans.
3. They discourage use of traditional knowledge systems.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding tribal development:
 1. TRIFED promotes marketing of tribal products.
 2. Van Dhan Yojana supports tribal entrepreneurship.
 3. Tribal art forms have no role in economic development.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
“Cultural preservation and economic development can go hand in hand.”



7. TAMIL'S GLOBAL MOMENT: A LANGUAGE THAT SURVIVED – NOW THRIVES

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Tamil designated as language of the year at a global linguistic summit, boosting classical language recognition.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Historical Significance:**
 - A. Over 2,000 years of recorded history.
 - B. Sangam literature represents early classical Tamil works.
- II. **Official Recognition:**
 - A. Declared a **Classical Language of India** in 2004.
- III. **Global Presence:**
 - A. Spoken in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, and among diaspora worldwide.
- IV. **Cultural Institutions:**
 - A. Central Institute of Classical Tamil promotes Tamil studies and research.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Ancient Heritage:** One of the longest surviving classical languages with continuous usage.
- **Literary Wealth:** Rich corpus including Sangam texts, devotional literature, and modern works.

- **Global Diaspora:** Strong presence in Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America.
- **Digital Revival:** Growth in Tamil content across internet, AI, and language technologies.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Promotes India's soft power globally.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Tamil:** Dravidian language; classical language status.
- **Sangam Literature:** Early Tamil literary corpus (circa 300 BCE–300 CE).
- **Classical Language Criteria:** Antiquity, rich heritage, and independent tradition.
- **Global Spread:** Official language in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka, and Singapore.
- **Institutions:** Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Tamil University.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding Tamil language:

 1. It is one of the classical languages of India.
 2. Sangam literature is associated with Tamil.
 3. Tamil has no presence outside India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.



- **Mains PYQ:**

"Language is a key element of cultural identity and soft power."

Discuss the significance of Tamil language in India's cultural heritage and its growing global influence.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the historical and cultural significance of the Tamil language.
- Discuss its role in India's soft power and the factors contributing to its global resurgence in the contemporary world. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Tamil language:

1. It is recognized as a classical language in India.
2. Sangam literature is part of its early literary tradition.
3. It is spoken only within India and has no global presence.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

8. THE COLOUR RED: LIFE, DEATH & EVERYTHING INDIA HOLDS SACRED

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Anthropological study explored red's multidimensional symbolism across Indian rituals, festivals, and folk traditions.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Cultural Symbolism:**
 - A. Red is associated with energy, passion, and divinity in Indian traditions.
- II. **Religious Context:**
 - A. Linked with deities like Durga and Lakshmi.
- III. **Ritual Usage:**
 - A. Sindoor, kumkum, bridal attire, and sacred threads.
- IV. **Anthropological View:**
 - A. Colours function as symbols conveying social meaning and identity.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Auspiciousness:** Red symbolizes prosperity, fertility, and marital bliss (e.g., bridal sarees, sindoor).
- **Spiritual Power:** Associated with Shakti (divine feminine energy).
- **Lifecycle Presence:** Present in rituals from birth ceremonies to death rites.
- **Cultural Diversity:** Different regions interpret and use red uniquely.



- **Symbolic Duality:** Represents both life (celebration) and death (sacrifice, martyrdom).

symbolism in Indian traditions, with special reference to the colour red.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Sindoor/Kumkum:** Red powder used in Hindu rituals.
- **Shakti Concept:** Represents feminine divine power.
- **Festivals:** Holi, Durga Puja, weddings prominently feature red.
- **Anthropology:** Study of symbols and cultural practices.
- **Material Source:** Traditionally derived from turmeric-lime or vermilion compounds.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding cultural symbolism in India:
 1. Colours often carry religious and social meanings.
 2. Red is associated with auspiciousness in many Indian rituals.
 3. Cultural symbols are uniform across all regions of India.*Which of the statements given above is/are correct?*
Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**
"Symbols and rituals play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity."
Discuss the significance of colour

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the cultural and symbolic significance of the colour red in India.
- Discuss how it reflects broader themes of life, spirituality, and social identity across different rituals and traditions. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the cultural symbolism of red in India:

1. It is associated with auspiciousness and fertility.
2. It is linked to divine feminine energy (Shakti).
3. It has a uniform meaning across all regions and communities in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



9. SAHITYA AKADEMI 2025: THE WRITERS WHO MADE INDIA READ

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Sahitya Akademi announced its 2025 literary awards across 24 Indian languages, celebrating regional literature.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Sahitya Akademi:**
 - A. Sahitya Akademi, established in 1954.
- II. **Objective:** Promotion of literature, translation, and cultural exchange among Indian languages.
- III. **Award Categories:**
 - A. Sahitya Akademi Award (main).
 - B. Yuva Puraskar (young writers).
 - C. Bal Sahitya Puraskar (children's literature).
- IV. **Significance:**
 - A. Recognizes literary merit without political bias.
 - B. Encourages regional language writing and translation.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Multilingual Recognition:** Awards across 24 Indian languages, reflecting diversity.
- **Contemporary Themes:** Works often address social justice, identity, environment, and modern challenges.

- **Promotion of Translation:** Facilitates cultural exchange between linguistic regions.
- **Youth Engagement:** Yuva Puraskar nurtures emerging writers.
- **Cultural Integration:** Literature acts as a bridge across regions and communities.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Established:** 1954.
- **Languages Covered:** 24 (including English and Rajasthani).
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Awards:** Annual literary awards, translation awards, fellowships.
- **Related Academies:** Lalit Kala Akademi (art), Sangeet Natak Akademi (performing arts).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding Sahitya Akademi:

 1. It is India's National Academy of Letters.
 2. It recognizes works in multiple Indian languages.
 3. It is a constitutional body.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"Literature reflects society and shapes national identity."

Discuss the role of institutions like



Sahitya Akademi in promoting cultural diversity and literary excellence in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the role of Sahitya Akademi in promoting India's linguistic and cultural diversity.
- Discuss how literary awards contribute to national integration and intellectual discourse. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Sahitya Akademi:

1. It is an autonomous organization promoting literature in India.
2. It awards literary works in multiple Indian languages.
3. It is a constitutional body established by the Constitution of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

10. JHUMKA MEETS RALPH LAUREN: WHO OWNS INDIA'S HERITAGE — INDIA OR THE MARKET?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- IP controversy arose after a global fashion brand replicated traditional Indian jhumka design without GI acknowledgment.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs):** Include crafts, designs, textiles, and ornaments like jhumkas.
- II. **Globalization Impact:**
 - A. Increased visibility but also risk of commercialization without recognition.
- III. **Legal Frameworks:**
 - A. GI Tags (e.g., Banarasi saree, Kanchipuram silk).
 - B. IPR laws struggle to protect community-owned knowledge.
- IV. **India's Challenge:**
 - A. Balancing global exposure with safeguarding artisan rights and cultural identity.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Cultural Appropriation vs Appreciation:** Debate over ethical use of traditional designs.
- **Economic Inequality:** Artisans often do not benefit from global commercialization.



- **GI Protection:** Limited scope; many cultural elements remain unprotected.
- **Soft Power:** Indian culture gains global recognition but risks dilution.
- **Policy Need:** Stronger frameworks for protecting traditional knowledge and ensuring fair compensation.

- **Mains PYQ:**
"Globalization has both preserved and commodified cultural heritage."
Discuss the challenges of protecting traditional knowledge and cultural expressions in the global market economy.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **GI Tag:** Identifies goods with specific geographical origin and qualities.
- **Examples:** Banarasi Saree, Pashmina, Channapatna toys.
- **WIPO:** Works on protecting traditional cultural expressions globally.
- **IPR Limitation:** Designed for individuals/corporations, not communities.
- **Schemes:** ODOP (One District One Product), Handloom Mark.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding Geographical Indications (GI):
 1. GI tags protect products with specific geographical origin.
 2. They ensure that benefits accrue to local producers.
 3. All traditional cultural expressions are automatically protected under GI.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 1 and 2 only.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the issue of cultural appropriation in the context of global fashion using Indian traditional elements.
- Discuss the role of GI tags, IPR frameworks, and policy measures in protecting indigenous heritage and ensuring equitable benefits. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding protection of traditional cultural expressions:

1. Geographical Indications help protect products linked to a specific region.
2. Traditional knowledge is fully protected under existing IPR frameworks.
3. Cultural appropriation raises concerns about fair benefit-sharing.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- Options:**
A. 1 and 3 only



- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

II. PM UNITY MALLS: CAN POLICY GIVE HANDICRAFTS THE SHELF SPACE THEY DESERVE?



WHY IN THE NEWS?

- PM launched PM Unity Malls in Varanasi to promote Uttar Pradesh's traditional handicrafts and weaver communities.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Concept of PM Unity Malls:**
 - A. Dedicated physical marketplaces in urban and tourist hubs.
- II. **Linked Initiatives:**
 - A. ODOP scheme promoting district-specific products.
 - B. GI tagging for protecting regional identity.
- III. **Issues Faced by Handicraft Sector:**

- A. Limited access to organized retail markets.
- B. Dependence on middlemen reducing profit margins.
- C. Competition from cheap mass-produced goods.

IV. Policy Vision:

- A. Integrate traditional crafts with modern supply chains and retail infrastructure.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Enhanced Market Access:** Provides artisans a national platform to sell directly.
- **Brand Building:** Improves recognition of local crafts and regional identities.
- **Tourism Synergy:** Located in high-footfall areas, boosting cultural tourism.
- **Income Generation:** Strengthens livelihoods of rural artisans and MSMEs.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Logistics, quality standardization, pricing competitiveness, and ensuring continuous demand.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **ODOP (One District One Product):** Promotes specialization and export potential.
- **GI Tag:** Protects products linked to specific geographical origin (e.g., Banarasi silk).
- **MSME Sector:** Contributes ~30% to India's GDP and significant employment.



- **Vocal for Local:** Encourages domestic production and consumption.
- **Handicraft Sector:** Labor-intensive, eco-friendly, and culturally significant.

sustainable growth and fair income.
(150 words)

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding GI and handicrafts:

1. GI tags protect products with specific geographical origin.
2. The handicrafts sector plays a role in employment generation.
3. GI tags are applicable only to agricultural products.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Promotion of local products is essential for inclusive economic development."

Discuss the role of initiatives like PM Unity Malls in integrating traditional crafts into modern markets.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Evaluate the role of PM Unity Malls in promoting India's handicraft sector.
- Discuss the challenges faced by artisans in accessing markets and suggest policy measures to ensure

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding PM Unity Malls:

1. They aim to promote local and GI-tagged products.
2. They help provide direct market access to artisans.
3. They are restricted only to agricultural produce.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

12.INDIA'S SYMBOLS: BORROWED, RECLAIMED – OR JUST MISUNDERSTOOD?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Debate emerged over appropriate use of national symbols amid rising commercialisation and misrepresentation.



BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **National Symbols:**
 - A. State Emblem derived from the Ashoka Lion Capital.
 - B. National Flag incorporates Ashoka Chakra.
- II. **Historical Evolution:**
 - A. Symbols evolve through **adaptation, reinterpretation, and political context.**
- III. **Cultural Layering:**
 - A. Many symbols predate modern India but have been **reclaimed during nation-building.**
- IV. **Debate:**
 - A. Whether reinterpretation dilutes original meaning or strengthens cultural continuity.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Historical Roots:** Many symbols trace back to ancient civilizations (Mauryan, Vedic traditions).
- **Reinterpretation:** Freedom movement redefined symbols for unity and resistance.
- **Cultural Continuity:** Symbols bridge past and present identities.
- **Misinterpretation Risks:** Simplification or politicization can distort meanings.
- **National Identity:** Symbols play a crucial role in shaping collective consciousness.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **State Emblem:** Adapted from Ashoka Lion Capital (Sarnath).
- **Ashoka Chakra:** 24-spoke wheel symbolizing law (Dharma).
- **National Flag Adoption:** 22 July 1947.
- **Motto:** "Satyameva Jayate" from Mundaka Upanishad.
- **Symbolism:** Represents unity, justice, and continuity.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding national symbols of India:

 1. The State Emblem is derived from Ashoka Lion Capital.
 2. Ashoka Chakra represents the wheel of law (Dharma).
 3. National symbols have no historical roots prior to independence.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"National symbols are reflections of historical continuity and cultural identity."

Discuss the evolution and significance of India's national symbols in the context of nation-building.



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the evolution of India's national and cultural symbols.
- Discuss whether they are borrowed, reclaimed, or reinterpreted, and analyse their role in shaping national identity and collective memory. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding India's national symbols:

1. The State Emblem is derived from the Ashoka Lion Capital.
2. The Ashoka Chakra symbolizes Dharma or law.
3. National symbols were created entirely after independence with no historical basis.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

13. RELIGIOUS TOURISM MEETS ECOLOGY: FAITH AT THE CROSSROADS OF NATURE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- NITI Aayog report called for integrating ecological carrying capacity norms into religious tourism site management.

SUMMARY

- Religious tourism in India is expanding rapidly, contributing to **economic growth and cultural integration**.
- However, it poses challenges to **fragile ecosystems, biodiversity, and local resources**.
- Balancing **faith-based tourism with ecological sustainability** is becoming a key policy concern.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- Religious Tourism in India:**
 - A. One of the largest segments of domestic tourism.
- Ecological Sensitivity:**
 - A. Many pilgrimage sites are located in **Himalayan and forest ecosystems**.
- Environmental Concerns:**
 - A. Waste generation, deforestation, water scarcity, and infrastructure pressure.
- Policy Measures:**



- A. Eco-sensitive zone regulations, carrying capacity studies, and sustainable tourism guidelines.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Economic Benefits:** Boosts local employment, infrastructure, and regional development.
- **Ecological Stress:** Overcrowding leads to habitat degradation and pollution.
- **Carrying Capacity:** Need to limit visitors based on environmental thresholds.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Waste management, eco-friendly infrastructure, and regulated access.
- **Community Role:** Local participation crucial for conservation and tourism management.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Carrying Capacity:** Maximum number of visitors an area can sustain without ecological damage.
- **Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ):** Buffer areas around protected regions.
- **Sustainable Tourism:** Minimizes environmental impact while supporting local communities.
- **Himalayan Ecosystem:** Fragile, prone to landslides and climate change impacts.
- **Schemes:** PRASHAD scheme (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive).

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding sustainable tourism:

1. It aims to minimize environmental impact.
 2. Carrying capacity is a key concept in tourism management.
 3. Religious tourism has no environmental impact.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Tourism can be both a boon and a bane for the environment."

Discuss the challenges of managing religious tourism in ecologically sensitive areas and suggest measures for sustainable development.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the impact of religious tourism on ecologically sensitive regions in India.
- Discuss the concept of carrying capacity and suggest measures to balance faith-based tourism with environmental sustainability. (150 words)



PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding religious tourism and ecology:

1. Carrying capacity helps determine sustainable visitor limits.
2. Religious tourism can contribute to environmental degradation.
3. Eco-sensitive zones are meant to promote unrestricted tourism activities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

14. KURUMBA PAINTING: TRIBAL ART ROOTED IN NATURE AND SPIRITUALITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Featured in cultural preservation efforts highlighting indigenous tribal art forms like Kurumba painting under government promotion of traditional heritage.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Kurumba Tribe:**
 - A. Indigenous community residing in the **Nilgiri region** of Tamil Nadu.
- II. **Art Characteristics:**
 - A. Use of natural colors and simple lines.
 - B. Depictions of forests, animals, and tribal life.
- III. **Cultural Role:**
 - A. Closely linked with rituals, storytelling, and spiritual practices.
- IV. **Challenges:**
 - A. Declining number of practitioners.
 - B. Limited market access and commercialization pressures.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Nature-Centric Themes:** Focus on forests, animals, and ecological harmony.
- **Spiritual Expression:** Reflects tribal beliefs and rituals.
- **Minimalist Style:** Simple forms with symbolic meanings.
- **Cultural Identity:** Preserves traditions of the Kurumba community.
- **Conservation Need:** Requires institutional support and market linkage.



PadhAI PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Location:** Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu.
- **Tribe:** Kurumba (Scheduled Tribe).
- **Medium:** Natural dyes and pigments.
- **Themes:** Nature, wildlife, rituals.
- **Comparison:** Similar to Warli (Maharashtra), Gond (MP) in tribal art tradition.

PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding tribal art forms:

1. They often depict nature and daily life.
2. They are completely commercial and urban in origin.
3. They reflect cultural traditions of indigenous communities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Tribal art forms are repositories of indigenous knowledge and culture."

Discuss the significance of preserving tribal art in India with examples.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the cultural and ecological significance of tribal art forms like Kurumba painting.

- Discuss the challenges faced in their preservation and suggest measures for their promotion. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Kurumba painting:

1. It is a tribal art form from the Nilgiri Hills.
2. It primarily depicts urban industrial themes.
3. It reflects nature and spiritual beliefs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



Subject

Society & Social Issue



1. NEP'S UNDERGRAD CHAOS: REFORM ON PAPER, CONFUSION IN CLASSROOMS

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- UGC's new NEP-aligned 4-year undergraduate framework left universities and students in structural uncertainty.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Key UG Reforms under NEP:**
 - A. 4-year undergraduate programme (FYUP).
 - B. Multiple exit options (certificate, diploma, degree).
 - C. Academic Bank of Credits (ABC).
- II. **Implementing Bodies:**
 - A. University Grants Commission (UGC).
- III. **Challenges:**
 - A. Lack of uniform guidelines across universities.
 - B. Faculty training and curriculum redesign gaps.
 - C. Administrative and digital infrastructure limitations.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Flexibility vs Clarity:** While offering choice, the system lacks clear operational guidelines.
-

- **Credit Transfer Issues:** Academic Bank of Credits not uniformly implemented.
- **Institutional Readiness:** Many colleges lack resources for multidisciplinary education.
- **Student Confusion:** Uncertainty about degree value and exit options.
- **Federal Concerns:** Education being a concurrent subject leads to varied state-level adoption.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **NEP 2020:** Replaced National Policy on Education 1986.
- **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC):** Digital system to store academic credits.
- **FYUP:** Four-Year Undergraduate Programme.
- **Multiple Exit Options:** Certificate (1 year), Diploma (2 years), Degree (3/4 years).
- **Regulator:** UGC oversees higher education reforms.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding NEP 2020:

 1. It introduces multiple exit options in undergraduate education.



2. Academic Bank of Credits allows credit transfer between institutions.
3. It abolishes higher education regulation by UGC.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

• **Mains PYQ:**

“Educational reforms require effective implementation to achieve desired outcomes.”

Discuss the challenges in implementing NEP 2020 in higher education and suggest measures to address them.

3. It completely removes the role of UGC in higher education.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

2. RIGHTS OF THE DISABLED: A SETBACK DRESSED UP AS POLICY

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the challenges in implementing undergraduate reforms under NEP 2020.
- Discuss the issues of institutional readiness, student adaptability, and policy coherence. Suggest measures for effective implementation. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding NEP 2020 undergraduate reforms:

1. It introduces multiple exit options for students.
2. Academic Bank of Credits facilitates credit transfer.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- SC flagged implementation failures in RPwD Act 2016 following complaints of reduced disability certificate validity.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **RPwD Act, 2016:**
 - A. Replaced the 1995 Act; aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- II. **Key Provisions:**
 - A. 4% reservation in government jobs.
 - B. Inclusive education and barrier-free access.
 - C. Time-bound grievance redressal.
- III. **Challenges:**
 - A. Poor infrastructure accessibility.



- B. Inadequate awareness and enforcement.
- C. Bureaucratic hurdles in certification and benefits.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Legal vs Ground Reality:** Strong legal framework but weak implementation.
- **Accessibility Gaps:** Public infrastructure often is not disability-friendly.
- **Reservation Issues:** Delays and inconsistencies in job quotas.
- **Digital Divide:** Limited access to assistive technologies and inclusive digital platforms.
- **Policy Concerns:** Fear of dilution through administrative changes or weak enforcement.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **RPwD Act, 2016:** Recognizes 21 disabilities.
- **Reservation:** 4% in government jobs, 5% in higher education.
- **UNCRPD:** International treaty for disability rights.
- **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan):** Launched for accessibility.
- **Key Principle:** Equality, dignity, and non-discrimination.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding disability rights in India:

1. RPwD Act, 2016 recognizes multiple categories of disabilities.
2. It provides reservation in education and employment.
3. Accessibility is not a focus area of the Act.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Legal provisions alone are insufficient without effective implementation."

Discuss the challenges in ensuring rights of persons with disabilities in India and suggest measures for inclusive development.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the effectiveness of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- Discuss the challenges in implementation and suggest measures to ensure accessibility, inclusion, and protection of rights. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the RPwD Act, 2016:



1. It recognizes 21 categories of disabilities.
2. It provides reservation in employment and education.
3. It excludes accessibility as a policy objective.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

3. BAN KIDS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA? THE STATE WANTS IN — THE CONSTITUTION MAY OBJECT

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh moved to ban social media for under-18s, raising constitutional and enforcement questions.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Concerns Driving Regulation:**
 - A. Cyberbullying, harmful content, screen addiction.
 - B. Data privacy risks and algorithmic manipulation.
- II. **Legal Framework in India:**
 - A. IT Rules, 2021 regulate intermediaries.

- B. Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 addresses data privacy.

III. **Constitutional Context:**

- A. Article 19(1)(a): Freedom of speech and expression.
- B. Article 21: Right to privacy (recognized in Puttaswamy Judgment).

IV. **Global Trends:**

- A. Countries like Australia, UK considering stricter child online safety laws.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Child Protection vs Rights:** Balancing safety with constitutional freedoms.
- **Proportionality Principle:** Restrictions must be reasonable and not excessive.
- **Implementation Challenge:** Age verification mechanisms and enforcement issues.
- **Digital Literacy:** Need for awareness rather than outright bans.
- **Platform Responsibility:** Role of tech companies in ensuring safe online environments.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty (includes privacy).
- **Puttaswamy Case (2017):** Recognized privacy as a fundamental right.
- **IT Rules, 2021:** Regulate social media intermediaries.



- **DPDP Act, 2023:** Governs personal data protection in India.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding fundamental rights:

1. Freedom of speech is guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a).
2. Right to privacy is part of Article 21.
3. Fundamental rights are absolute and cannot be restricted.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"Balancing individual freedoms with state regulation is a key constitutional challenge."

Discuss the constitutional validity of restricting minors' access to social media in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Critically examine the proposal to restrict social media access for minors in India.
- Discuss its constitutional implications, challenges in implementation, and alternative policy approaches. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding regulation of social media for minors:

1. Article 19(1)(a) guarantees freedom of speech and expression.
2. Right to privacy is protected under Article 21.
3. The State can impose unlimited restrictions on fundamental rights.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

4. CARE WORK: THE LABOUR THAT RUNS INDIA — INVISIBLE ON EVERY PAYCHECK

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Economic Survey highlighted unpaid care work by women as a major unmeasured contributor to India's GDP.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Nature of Care Work:**



- A. Includes cooking, cleaning, caregiving, and domestic management.
- II. **Gender Dimension:**
 - A. Women perform a disproportionate share of unpaid work.
- III. **Economic Perspective:**
 - A. Not included in GDP as per United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA).
- IV. **Policy Debate:**
 - A. Whether unpaid care work should be monetized or compensated.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Invisible Contribution:** Significant economic value but excluded from formal metrics like GDP.
- **Gender Inequality:** Limits women's participation in paid employment.
- **Time Poverty:** Women spend more hours on unpaid work, affecting education and employment opportunities.
- **Policy Recognition:** Need for time-use surveys, social security, and support services.
- **Global Discourse:** UN and ILO emphasize recognition, reduction, and redistribution of care work.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Unpaid Care Work:** Non-remunerated domestic and caregiving activities.
- **Time Use Survey (India):** Measures time spent on various activities.

- **GDP Limitation:** Excludes unpaid household services.
- **SDG 5:** Gender equality includes recognition of unpaid care work.
- **ILO:** Advocates for decent work and social protection.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding unpaid care work:

 1. It is included in GDP calculations.
 2. It is predominantly performed by women.
 3. It has no economic value.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
Answer: 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"Unpaid care work is a major barrier to gender equality."

Discuss the significance of recognizing unpaid care work in India's economic and social policy framework.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the role of unpaid care work in India's economy.
- Discuss its implications for gender equality and suggest policy measures for its recognition, reduction, and redistribution. (150 words)



PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding unpaid care work:

1. It is not included in GDP calculations.
2. It is predominantly performed by women.
3. It has no economic significance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

5. INDIA'S DEMOGRAPHICS: THE NUMBERS ARE CHANGING — IS THE POLICY?

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- SRS Bulletin 2025 showed India's TFR at 2.0, below replacement level, raising demographic dividend and ageing concerns.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

I. Key Trends:

- A. Declining Total Fertility Rate (TFR) nearing replacement level (~2.1).
- B. Rising median age and elderly population.
- C. Regional disparities (southern states ageing faster than northern states).

II. Data Sources:

- A. National Family Health Survey (NFHS).
- B. Census of India.

III. Policy Shift:

- A. From population stabilization to **skill development, employment, and healthcare systems.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Demographic Dividend:** Large working-age population offers economic growth potential.
- **Ageing Challenge:** Increasing elderly population requires pension and healthcare reforms.
- **Regional Imbalance:** Fertility differences affect resource allocation and political representation.
- **Urbanization:** Migration to cities creating infrastructure pressure.
- **Policy Gap:** Slow adaptation in labour, education, and social security systems.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **TFR (Total Fertility Rate):** Average number of children per woman.
- **Replacement Level Fertility:** ~2.1.



- **Demographic Dividend:** Economic growth potential from the working-age population.
- **Ageing Population:** 60+ age group increasing in share.
- **NFHS:** Provides health and demographic indicators.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding demographic trends in India:

1. India's TFR has been declining.
2. Demographic dividend refers to a high dependency ratio.
3. Ageing population requires social security measures.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**

"India's demographic dividend is both an opportunity and a challenge."

Discuss the changing demographic trends in India and evaluate the adequacy of policy responses.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the changing demographic profile of India.
- Discuss the challenges posed by declining fertility, ageing population, and regional disparities, and suggest

policy measures to harness demographic advantages. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding India's demographics:

1. Total Fertility Rate in India is declining.
2. Demographic dividend refers to a higher proportion of the working-age population.
3. The aging population reduces the need for social security systems.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

6. WOMEN IN POLITICS: THE QUOTA IS COMING — THE QUESTION IS WHEN

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Women's Reservation Act (106th Amendment) passed but linked to delimitation, delaying implementation beyond 2029.



BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Historical Demand:**
 - A. Women's reservation has been debated since the 1990s.
- II. **Key Features of the Act:**
 - A. 1/3rd seats reserved for women, including SC/ST quotas.
 - B. Rotational reservation across constituencies.
- III. **Implementation Condition:**
 - A. Linked to delimitation based on updated census data.
- IV. **Current Representation:**
 - A. Women constitute ~15% in Lok Sabha (approx.), indicating underrepresentation.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Delayed Implementation:** Reservation tied to delimitation creates uncertainty in timeline.
- **Political Empowerment:** Aims to enhance women's participation in decision-making.
- **Grassroots Success:** Panchayati Raj institutions already have 33–50% reservation for women.
- **Structural Barriers:** Patriarchy, financial constraints, and political gatekeeping persist.
- **Debate on Quotas:** Merit vs representation, and need for capacity-building.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Women's Reservation Act, 2023:** Provides 33% reservation in legislatures.
- **Delimitation:** Redrawing of electoral constituencies based on population.
- **73rd & 74th Amendments:** Reservation for women in local bodies.
- **Current Status:** Not yet implemented at parliamentary/state level.
- **Global Context:** Many countries use quotas to improve representation.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding women's reservation:

 1. It provides 33% reservation in Lok Sabha.
 2. It is already implemented in State Assemblies.
 3. Panchayati Raj institutions have reservations for women.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"Political representation of women is essential for inclusive governance."

Discuss the significance and challenges of implementing women's reservation in legislatures in India.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the significance of the Women's Reservation Act, 2023.



- Discuss the challenges in its implementation and its potential impact on political empowerment and democratic governance in India. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding women's reservation in India:

1. The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 provides 33% reservation in legislatures.
2. Its implementation is linked to delimitation after the Census.
3. It is already fully implemented across all State Assemblies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

7. TB AT 100: INDIA'S OLDEST ENEMY — STILL NOT DEFEATED

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- India missed its 2025 TB elimination target; Nikshay Mitra programme and PM TB Mukt Bharat intensified.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Cause:**
 - A. Caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, primarily affecting lungs.
- II. **Transmission:**
 - A. Airborne spread through droplets.
- III. **Government Initiative:**
 - A. National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP).
- IV. **Global Context:**
 - A. WHO's End TB Strategy targets elimination by 2030.
- V. **India's Goal:**
 - A. TB-free India by 2025 (ambitious target).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **High Burden:** India accounts for a significant share of global TB cases.
- **Drug-Resistant TB:** Rising cases of MDR-TB complicate treatment.
- **Social Determinants:** Poverty, malnutrition, and overcrowding contribute to spread.
- **Detection Gaps:** Underdiagnosis and stigma delay treatment.
- **Policy Measures:** Free diagnosis, treatment, nutritional support (Nikshay Poshan Yojana).

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **TB Bacteria:** *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.



- **BCG Vaccine:** Provides limited protection, mainly in children.
- **NTEP:** India's flagship TB control program.
- **MDR-TB:** Multi-drug resistant tuberculosis.
- **Nikshay Portal:** Digital platform for TB patient tracking.

measures in achieving the target of a TB-free India. (150 words)

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding Tuberculosis:

1. It is caused by a bacterial infection.
2. It spreads through airborne droplets.
3. It is completely eradicated in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

- **Mains PYQ:**
"Communicable diseases continue to challenge India's public health system."
Discuss the challenges in eliminating tuberculosis in India and suggest measures for effective control.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the challenges faced by India in eliminating tuberculosis.
- Discuss the role of social determinants, healthcare infrastructure, and policy

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Tuberculosis:

1. It is caused by a bacterium.
2. It spreads through airborne transmission.
3. Drug-resistant TB poses no challenge to treatment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

8. DNTs IN THE CENSUS: COUNTED AS CITIZENS, INVISIBLE AS A COMMUNITY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- NCBC recommended separate enumeration of Denotified and Nomadic Tribes in Census 2027 for policy targeting.



BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Colonial Legacy:**
 - A. Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 stigmatized certain communities.
- II. **Post-Independence:**
 - A. Act repealed in 1952; communities "denotified."
- III. **Current Classification:**
 - A. Spread across SC, ST, OBC categories or unclassified.
- IV. **Institutional Efforts:**
 - A. National Commission for Denotified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT).
- V. **Key Issue:**
 - A. Absence of reliable data for policymaking.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Data Deficit:** No separate census category leads to invisibility in statistics.
- **Social Marginalization:** Continued stigma, poverty, and lack of access to services.
- **Policy Gaps:** Difficulty in designing targeted welfare schemes.
- **Mobility Challenge:** Nomadic lifestyle complicates enumeration and service delivery.
- **Need for Recognition:** Calls for dedicated classification and inclusive policies.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **DNTs:** Communities once notified under Criminal Tribes Act, 1871.
- **Denotification Year:** 1952.
- **NCDNT:** Commission to study and recommend welfare measures.
- **SEED Scheme:** Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs.
- **Key Issue:** Lack of reliable data and targeted policy support.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding DNTs:

 1. They were previously classified under the Criminal Tribes Act.
 2. They have a distinct category in the Census of India.
 3. They face issues of social and economic marginalization.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 3 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"Data is crucial for inclusive policymaking."

Discuss the challenges faced by Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes in India and the importance of their proper enumeration.



PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Examine the issues faced by Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) in India.
- Discuss how lack of proper enumeration affects policymaking and suggest measures for their inclusive development. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding DNTs:

1. They were earlier classified under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871.
2. They have a separate category in the Census of India.
3. They face challenges of social and economic marginalization.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 2 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A

9. CHILDREN & MALNUTRITION: WHEN THE PLATE IS HALF EMPTY AND THE POLICY IS FULLY DELAYED

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- NFHS-5 data revealed 40% children in some states remain stunted despite decade-long nutrition programmes.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

I. Key Indicators:

- A. Stunting (low height-for-age).
- B. Wasting (low weight-for-height).
- C. Underweight (low weight-for-age).

II. Government Schemes:

- A. POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission).
- B. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- C. Mid-Day Meal Scheme (PM POSHAN).

III. Causes:

- A. Poverty, food insecurity, poor maternal health, sanitation issues.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **High Prevalence:** India accounts for a large share of global malnourished children.



- **Intergenerational Cycle:** Malnourished mothers lead to malnourished children.
- **Implementation Gaps:** Leakages, delays, and inadequate coverage of schemes.
- **Health Impact:** Affects immunity, learning ability, and productivity.
- **Multi-Sectoral Issue:** Linked to health, sanitation, education, and gender equality.

- **Mains PYQ:**
"Malnutrition is not merely a health issue but a developmental challenge."
Discuss the causes and consequences of child malnutrition in India and evaluate the effectiveness of government interventions.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Stunting:** Chronic malnutrition indicator.
- **Wasting:** Acute malnutrition indicator.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** Launched in 2018 for nutrition improvement.
- **ICDS:** Provides supplementary nutrition, preschool education.
- **SDG 2:** Zero Hunger; **SDG 3:** Good Health and Well-being.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**
Consider the following statements regarding malnutrition:
 1. Stunting reflects chronic malnutrition.
 2. Wasting reflects acute malnutrition.
 3. Malnutrition has no impact on cognitive development.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

- Analyse the problem of child malnutrition in India.
- Discuss the role of government schemes and identify gaps in implementation. Suggest a multi-sectoral approach to address the issue effectively. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding child malnutrition:

1. Stunting indicates chronic malnutrition.
2. Wasting indicates acute malnutrition.
3. Malnutrition has no effect on cognitive development.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- Options:**
- A. 1 and 2 only
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 and 3 only
 - D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



10. WOMEN IN JUDICIARY: CJI ASKS FOR DIVERSITY – THE SYSTEM ASKS FOR TIME

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- CJI Sanjiv Khanna urged High Court Collegiums to proactively recommend women judges to address severe underrepresentation.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

- I. **Current Status:**
 - A. Low percentage of women judges in High Courts and the Supreme Court.
- II. **Appointment System:**
 - A. Collegium system governs judicial appointments.
- III. **Barriers:**
 - A. Gender bias, work-life balance issues, and fewer women in senior legal positions.
- IV. **Constitutional Context:**
 - A. Equality under Articles 14, 15, and 16.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Representation Gap:** Women constitute a small fraction of judges in higher judiciary.
- **Diversity and Justice:** Gender diversity improves sensitivity in adjudication.
- **Pipeline Problem:** Fewer women in senior advocacy roles limits elevation.

- **Institutional Reform:** Need for transparent and inclusive appointment processes.
- **Gradual Progress:** Increasing but slow rise in women judges over time.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Collegium System:** Judges appoint judges (SC and HC).
- **Articles 124 & 217:** Deal with appointment of SC and HC judges.
- **Gender Equality:** Articles 14, 15, 16.
- **First Woman SC Judge:** Justice Fathima Beevi (1989).
- **Current Trend:** Gradual increase in women judges but still low representation.

PadhAI PYQ BOOSTER SECTION

- **Prelims PYQ:**

Consider the following statements regarding judiciary:

 1. Supreme Court judges are appointed under Article 124.
 2. High Court judges are appointed under Article 217.
 3. The Collegium system is mentioned explicitly in the Constitution.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: 1 and 2 only.
- **Mains PYQ:**

"Diversity in institutions strengthens democracy."

Discuss the need for gender diversity in



the Indian judiciary and the challenges in achieving it.

PadhAI MAINS PRACTICE

QUESTION

- Examine the issue of underrepresentation of women in the Indian judiciary.
- Discuss the causes and suggest measures to improve gender diversity in judicial appointments. (150 words)

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC

MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding women in judiciary:

1. Women are adequately represented in higher judiciary in India.
2. The Collegium system governs judicial appointments.
3. Gender diversity can improve justice delivery.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Options:

- A. 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A



Subject

Person in News



1. K. N. Panikkar



- **WHY IN THE NEWS -**

Recently passed away, prompting national reflection on his role as a leading historian who consistently challenged **communal interpretations of history** and defended academic independence.

Facts

- I. **Institutional Role:**
 - A. Former Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University
 - B. Former Vice-Chancellor of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit
- II. **Academic Specialisation:**
 - A. Modern Indian history with focus on **colonialism, nationalism, and cultural politics**
- III. **Historiographical Orientation:**
 - A. Prominent figure in **Marxist historiography**, analysing class, ideology, and power structures
- IV. **Major Works:**

- A. *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony*
- B. *Colonialism, Culture and Resistance*

- V. **Landmark Contribution:**

- A. Critiqued **communal distortions of history** and advocated **evidence-based, secular historiography**

- VI. **Public Intellectual Role:**

- A. Actively engaged in debates on **textbook revisions**, academic freedom, and politicisation of education

- VII. **Institutional Engagement:**

- A. Associated with Indian Council of Historical Research

- VIII. **Key Themes:**

- A. Link between **power and knowledge production**
- B. Cultural resistance during colonial rule
- C. Secularism in historical narratives

- IX. **Recognition:**

- A. Widely respected for intellectual contributions rather than popular awards

- X. **Legacy:**

- A. Remembered as a **voice of critical inquiry and academic integrity** in Indian historiography

Exam Insight:

Use K. N. Panikkar in answers on:

- "Politicisation of history"
- "Role of historians in safeguarding truth"



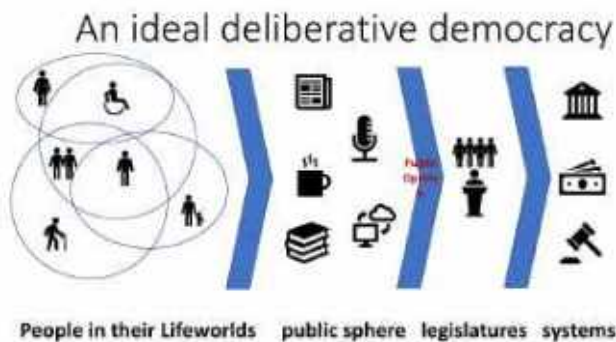
- "Ethics of academic freedom and dissent"

2. Jürgen Habermas



• WHY IN THE NEWS -

In news following his recent passing at the age of 96, marking the end of an era for one of the most influential thinkers on **democracy, public discourse, and rational communication.**



Facts

I. Institutional Role:

- A. Emeritus Professor at Goethe University Frankfurt

- B. Leading member of the **second generation of the Frankfurt School**

II. Academic Specialisation:

- A. Political philosophy, sociology, and **critical theory**

III. Key Concept:

- A. **Public Sphere** – a space where citizens engage in rational-critical debate independent of state and market

IV. Major Theory:

- A. **Theory of Communicative Action** – emphasizes dialogue, consensus, and rationality in social life

V. Landmark Works:

- A. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*
- B. *Theory of Communicative Action*

VI. Philosophical Influences:

- A. Inspired by Immanuel Kant (reason and ethics) and Karl Marx (critique of power structures)

VII. Core Ideas:

- A. **Deliberative democracy** over mere electoral democracy
- B. Legitimacy arises from **free, fair, and rational discourse**

VIII. Public Intellectual Role:

- A. Engaged in debates on **modernity, European integration, and constitutional democracy**

IX. Awards / Recognition:

- A. Recipient of **Kyoto Prize** and **Holberg Prize**



- X. **Legacy:**
 - A. Architect of modern understanding of **communication ethics and democratic legitimacy**

Exam Insight:

Use Jürgen Habermas in answers on:

- "Role of public discourse in democracy"
- "Deliberative vs procedural democracy"
- "Ethics of communication and media responsibility"

3. Robert S. Mueller III



- **WHY IN THE NEWS -**
Back in news following renewed discussions on his legacy amid reports of his passing, with focus on his role in probing interference in the 2016 United States Presidential Election and ensuring accountability at the highest levels of power.

Facts

- I. **Institutional Role:**
 - A. 6th Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2001–2013)
- II. **Special Counsel Role:**
 - A. Led the **Mueller Investigation (2017–2019)** into Russian interference and links with Donald Trump’s campaign
- III. **Professional Background:**
 - A. Former **U.S. Marine Corps officer** (Vietnam War veteran)
 - B. Served as a **federal prosecutor** in multiple high-profile cases
- IV. **Landmark Contribution:**
 - A. Produced the **Mueller Report**, a key document on election interference and obstruction of justice
- V. **Key Findings:**
 - A. Confirmed Russian interference in the 2016 election
 - B. Found insufficient evidence of criminal conspiracy
 - C. Did not conclusively exonerate the President on obstruction
- VI. **Institutional Impact:**



- A. Strengthened FBI's focus on **counterterrorism** after the September 11 attacks
- VII. **Reputation:**
 - A. Known for **integrity, neutrality, and professionalism** in politically sensitive roles
- VIII. **Awards / Recognition:**
 - A. Recipient of numerous national security and public service honors
- IX. **Public Image:**
 - A. Seen as a symbol of **rule of law vs executive power**
- X. **Legacy:**
 - A. Represents the importance of **independent investigations in democratic systems**

Exam Insight:

Use Robert Mueller in answers on:

- "Independence of investigative agencies"
- "Accountability of executive authority"
- "Ethics in public administration under pressure"

4. Sonam Wangchuk



- **WHY IN THE NEWS –**
News over his prolonged detention linked to protests demanding **Sixth Schedule safeguards and statehood for Ladakh**, bringing attention to environmental protection, civil liberties, and regional autonomy.

Facts

- I. **Institutional Role:**
 - A. Founder of Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh
- II. **Academic / Professional Background:**



- A. Mechanical engineer and grassroots innovator focused on **sustainable solutions for cold desert regions**
- III. **Major Innovation:**
 - A. Developed the **Ice Stupa** technique – artificial glaciers for **water conservation in Himalayan regions**
- IV. **Educational Contribution:**
 - A. Pioneer of **experiential learning**; reformed education for students failing in conventional systems
- V. **Public Activism:**
 - A. Leading advocate for **environmental protection in Ladakh**
 - B. Vocal supporter of **Sixth Schedule status** for safeguarding tribal rights and fragile ecosystems
- VI. **Cultural Impact:**
 - A. Inspired the character “Phunsukh Wangdu” in 3 Idiots
- VII. **Awards / Recognition:**
 - A. Recipient of **Ramon Magsaysay Award (2018)**
- VIII. **Key Themes:**
 - A. Climate resilience and sustainable development
 - B. Community-led innovation
 - C. Decentralised governance
- IX. **Recent Issue:**
 - A. Detention highlighted concerns regarding **right to protest and democratic freedoms**
- X. **Legacy (Ongoing):**
 - A. Symbol of **innovation-driven activism and ethical leadership**

Exam Insight:

Use Sonam Wangchuk in answers on:

- “Role of civil society in environmental governance”
- “Innovative solutions to climate change”
- “Balancing development with ecological sustainability”

5. Mark Carney



- **WHY IN THE NEWS –**
In news following his visit to New Delhi after taking office as Prime Minister of Canada, signaling a **reset in India–Canada relations** after recent diplomatic tensions.

Facts

- I. **Institutional Role:**
 - A. Prime Minister of Canada
 - B. Former Governor of the Bank of England (2013–2020)
 - C. Former Governor of the Bank of Canada
- II. **Academic Background:**



- A. Educated at **Harvard University** and **Oxford University** (Economics)
- III. **Professional Expertise:**
 - A. Globally renowned **central banker** and financial expert
- IV. **Key Contribution:**
 - A. Played a critical role in steering Canada through the **2008 Global Financial Crisis**
- V. **Global Roles:**
 - A. Served as UN Special Envoy for **Climate Action and Finance**
- VI. **Policy Orientation:**
 - A. Advocates **climate finance, sustainable investment, and financial regulation**
- VII. **Diplomatic Significance:**
 - A. Visit to India aims to **rebuild trust, enhance trade ties, and strengthen strategic cooperation**
- VIII. **Reputation:**
 - A. Known for **technocratic leadership and crisis management ability**
- IX. **Awards / Recognition:**
 - A. Widely regarded among the most influential central bankers globally
- X. **Legacy (Emerging):**
 - A. Represents transition from **economic technocrat to global political leader**

- "Climate finance in global governance"
- "Rebuilding diplomatic ties in geopolitics"

6. Jayanthi Kumaresh



- **WHY IN THE NEWS –**
In news for receiving widespread acclaim through recent performances and recognitions that have brought renewed global attention to the **veena**, highlighting India's classical music heritage.

Facts

- I. **Institutional / Artistic Role:**
 - A. Eminent **Carnatic classical musician** and leading **veena exponent**
- II. **Musical Lineage:**
 - A. Trained in a traditional family of musicians; discipleship rooted in the **guru-shishya parampara**

Exam Insight:

Use Mark Carney in answers on:

- "Role of technocrats in politics"



- III. **Specialisation:**
 - A. Mastery of the **Saraswati veena**, one of India's oldest classical instruments
- IV. **Innovative Contribution:**
 - A. Developed "**Gayaki Ang**" style on veena, closely imitating vocal expressions
- V. **Global Presence:**
 - A. Performed across major international stages, contributing to **cultural diplomacy**
- VI. **Major Works / Albums:**
 - A. Known for thematic concerts blending **tradition with innovation**
- VII. **Awards / Recognition:**
 - A. Recipient of Sangeet Natak Akademi Award
 - B. Honoured with **Kalaimamani Award** by Tamil Nadu Government
- VIII. **Cultural Contribution:**
 - A. Revived interest in veena among youth through workshops and mentorship
- IX. **Key Themes:**
 - A. Preservation of **intangible cultural heritage**
 - B. Fusion of classical purity with contemporary presentation
- X. **Legacy (Ongoing):**
 - A. A key figure ensuring the **continuity and relevance of Indian classical instruments**

- "Role of artists in preserving culture"
- "Soft power and cultural diplomacy"
- "Balancing tradition with innovation"

7. Marco Rubio



- **WHY IN THE NEWS –**
In news for his prominent role in shaping U.S. foreign policy debates aligned with the "**America First**" approach associated with Donald Trump, reflecting a shift toward assertive nationalism in diplomacy.

Exam Insight:

Use Jayanthi Kumaresh in answers on:

Facts

- I. **Institutional Role:**



- A. U.S. Senator from Florida (since 2011)
- B. Member of the **Senate Foreign Relations Committee**
- II. **Political Affiliation:**
 - A. Senior leader in the Republican Party
- III. **Academic / Personal Background:**
 - A. Cuban-American politician; background shapes his **strong stance on Latin America policy**
- IV. **Policy Orientation:**
 - A. Advocate of **hardline foreign policy**, especially toward China, Cuba, Venezuela, and Iran
- V. **Key Contribution:**
 - A. Vocal supporter of **economic sanctions and strategic competition with China**
- VI. **Ideological Positioning:**
 - A. Increasing alignment with **nationalist and populist strands** within U.S. politics
- VII. **Legislative Role:**
 - A. Active in shaping policies on **national security, trade, and technology restrictions**
- VIII. **Public Image:**
 - A. Seen as a bridge between traditional conservatism and **Trump-era populism**
- IX. **Controversies / Criticism:**
 - A. Criticised for prioritising **political loyalty over independent diplomacy**
- X. **Legacy (Evolving):**
 - A. Represents the transformation of U.S. foreign policy toward **strategic assertiveness and ideological alignment**

Exam Insight:

Use Marco Rubio in answers on:

- "Changing nature of U.S. foreign policy"
- "Rise of nationalist diplomacy"
- "Ethical dilemmas in political leadership and decision-making"

8. Mojtaba Khamenei



- **WHY IN THE NEWS -**

In the news after being appointed as the **Supreme Leader of Iran** following the assassination of his father Ali Khamenei during the ongoing Middle East conflict. His elevation has sparked



global debate over **hereditary succession, legitimacy, and the future direction of Iran's regime.**

resistance against Western powers

VIII. **Key Concerns / Criticism:**

- A. Questions over **religious legitimacy and democratic deficit**
- B. Criticism of dynastic-style transition in a republic

IX. **Strategic Outlook:**

- A. Emphasis on **national unity, regime continuity, and security-led governance**

X. **Legacy (Emerging):**

- A. Seen as a leader shaped by crisis, potentially redefining Iran's **power structure toward military-clerical consolidation**

Exam Insight:

Use Mojtaba Khamenei in answers on:

- "Leadership legitimacy in non-democratic systems"
- "Role of military in governance"
- "West Asian geopolitics and regime continuity under crisis"

Facts

I. **Institutional Role:**

- A. Supreme Leader of Iran (since March 2026)
- B. Selected by the Assembly of Experts

II. **Background:**

- A. Son of former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei
- B. Mid-ranking Shia cleric with education in **Qom seminaries**

III. **Unconventional Rise:**

- A. First instance of **quasi-hereditary succession** in Iran's Islamic Republic, which officially rejects monarchy

IV. **Pre-Leadership Role:**

- A. Held **no formal government office**, but widely believed to wield **behind-the-scenes influence**

V. **Power Base:**

- A. Strong ties with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a key pillar of regime stability

VI. **Leadership Context:**

- A. Took office during a **major war involving the U.S. and Israel**, marking one of the most critical phases in Iran's history

VII. **Ideological Position:**

- A. Considered a **hardliner**, expected to continue policies of



9. Balendra Shah (popularly known as Balen Shah)



- **WHY IN THE NEWS –**

In news after his rise from Mayor of Kathmandu to becoming Prime Minister of Nepal, symbolising a major **anti-establishment shift driven by youth politics and governance reforms.**

Facts

I. **Institutional Role:**

- A. Prime Minister of Nepal (recently assumed)
- B. Former Mayor of Kathmandu

II. **Background:**

- A. Civil engineer and **independent candidate** turned politician
- B. Also known as a **rapper and youth icon**

III. **Political Rise:**

- A. Won Kathmandu mayoral election as an **outsider,**

defeating traditional party candidates

IV. **Governance Approach:**

- A. Focus on **urban governance reforms,** anti-corruption drives, and administrative efficiency

V. **Youth Appeal:**

- A. Represents **Gen-Z political mobilisation** and dissatisfaction with traditional elites

VI. **Key Actions as Mayor:**

- A. Crackdown on **illegal constructions**
- B. Emphasis on **rule-based governance and accountability**

VII. **Leadership Style:**

- A. Direct communication via social media
- B. Seen as **assertive, reform-oriented, and unconventional**

VIII. **Political Significance:**

- A. His elevation signals **decline of traditional party dominance** in Nepal

IX. **Challenges Ahead:**

- A. Managing coalition politics
- B. Balancing reform agenda with political stability

X. **Legacy (Emerging):**

- A. Potentially redefining **grassroots-to-national leadership pathways** in South Asia

Exam Insight:

Use Balen Shah in answers on:

- "Rise of outsider politics"



- "Youth participation in democracy"
- "Governance reforms vs political stability"

10. Shiv Pratap Sandhu (commonly referred to as "Sandhu" in news reports)



- **WHY IN THE NEWS -**
In news following his appointment as the new **Lieutenant Governor of Delhi**, a position central to the ongoing **power dynamics between the elected government and the Union government.**

Facts

- I. **Institutional Role:**
 - A. Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Delhi
 - B. Representative of the **President of India** in the National Capital Territory
- II. **Administrative Background:**
 - A. Senior bureaucrat with extensive experience in **public administration and governance**
- III. **Constitutional Position:**
 - A. Functions under **Article 239AA**, which defines the special status of Delhi
- IV. **Key Responsibilities:**
 - A. Oversight of **law and order, land, and police** (subjects under Union control)
 - B. Works alongside the elected government led by the Chief Minister
- V. **Political Context:**
 - A. Role often at the centre of **Centre-State conflicts**, especially in Delhi
- VI. **Governance Significance:**
 - A. Plays a crucial role in **policy approvals, administrative decisions, and legislative matters**
- VII. **Recent Relevance:**
 - A. Appointment seen as significant amid ongoing debates over **administrative control and federal balance**
- VIII. **Key Challenges:**
 - A. Managing friction between **bureaucracy and elected representatives**
 - B. Ensuring smooth governance in a politically sensitive region
- IX. **Public Perception:**
 - A. Office often viewed as a **pivot of power-sharing tensions**
- X. **Legacy (Emerging):**



- A. Likely to shape the **future trajectory of Centre–Delhi relations**

Exam Insight:

Use this example in answers on:

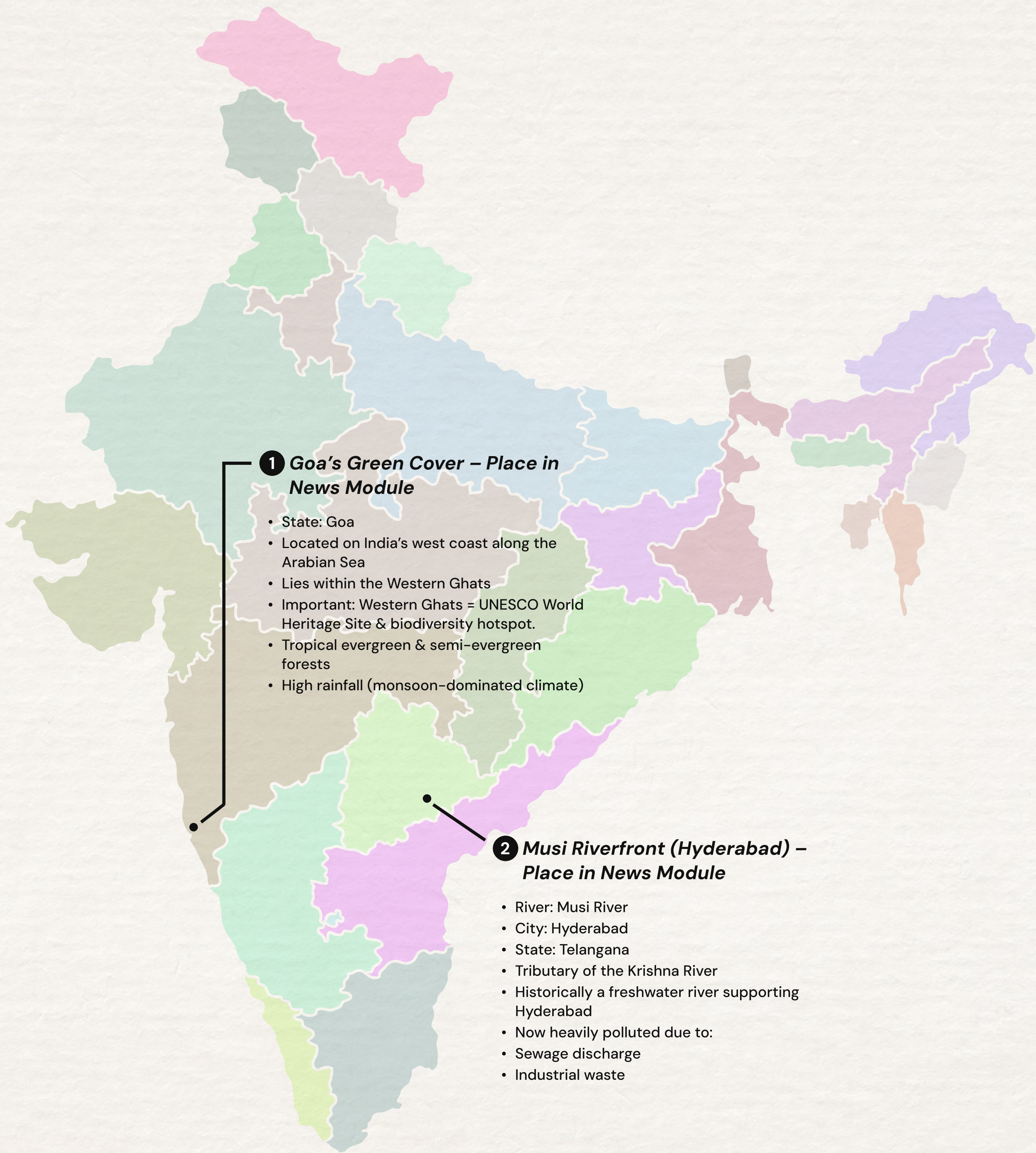
- “Cooperative vs confrontational federalism”
- “Role of constitutional offices in governance”
- “Administrative ethics in politically sensitive roles”



Subject

Places in News





1 Goa's Green Cover – Place in News Module

- State: Goa
- Located on India's west coast along the Arabian Sea
- Lies within the Western Ghats
- Important: Western Ghats = UNESCO World Heritage Site & biodiversity hotspot.
- Tropical evergreen & semi-evergreen forests
- High rainfall (monsoon-dominated climate)

2 Musi Riverfront (Hyderabad) – Place in News Module

- River: Musi River
- City: Hyderabad
- State: Telangana
- Tributary of the Krishna River
- Historically a freshwater river supporting Hyderabad
- Now heavily polluted due to:
- Sewage discharge
- Industrial waste

1 Durand Line – “A Colonial Scar That Still Bleeds”

- The Durand Line is the international boundary between:
- Afghanistan
- Pakistan
- Length: ~2,640 km
- Runs across:
- Rugged Hindu Kush mountains
- Tribal regions (Pashtun belt)

2 Strait of Hormuz – “21 Miles That Control the World’s Energy Pulse”

- Connects:
 - Persian Gulf
 - Gulf of Oman → Arabian Sea → Indian Ocean
- Bordered by:
 - Iran (North)
 - Oman (South; Musandam Peninsula)
- Extremely narrow maritime chokepoint
- Shallow waters with limited

3 Kurdistan – “The Eternal Frontline” (Now in Iran Conflict)

- Kurdistan is not a country, but a cultural-geographical region spread across:
 - Turkey
 - Iran
 - Iraq
 - Syria
- Core physical features:
 - Zagros Mountains (Iran–Iraq)
 - Taurus Mountains (Turkey)
 - Plateau + rugged terrain

5 Persian Gulf’s “Pearl” – Strategic Hotspot in News

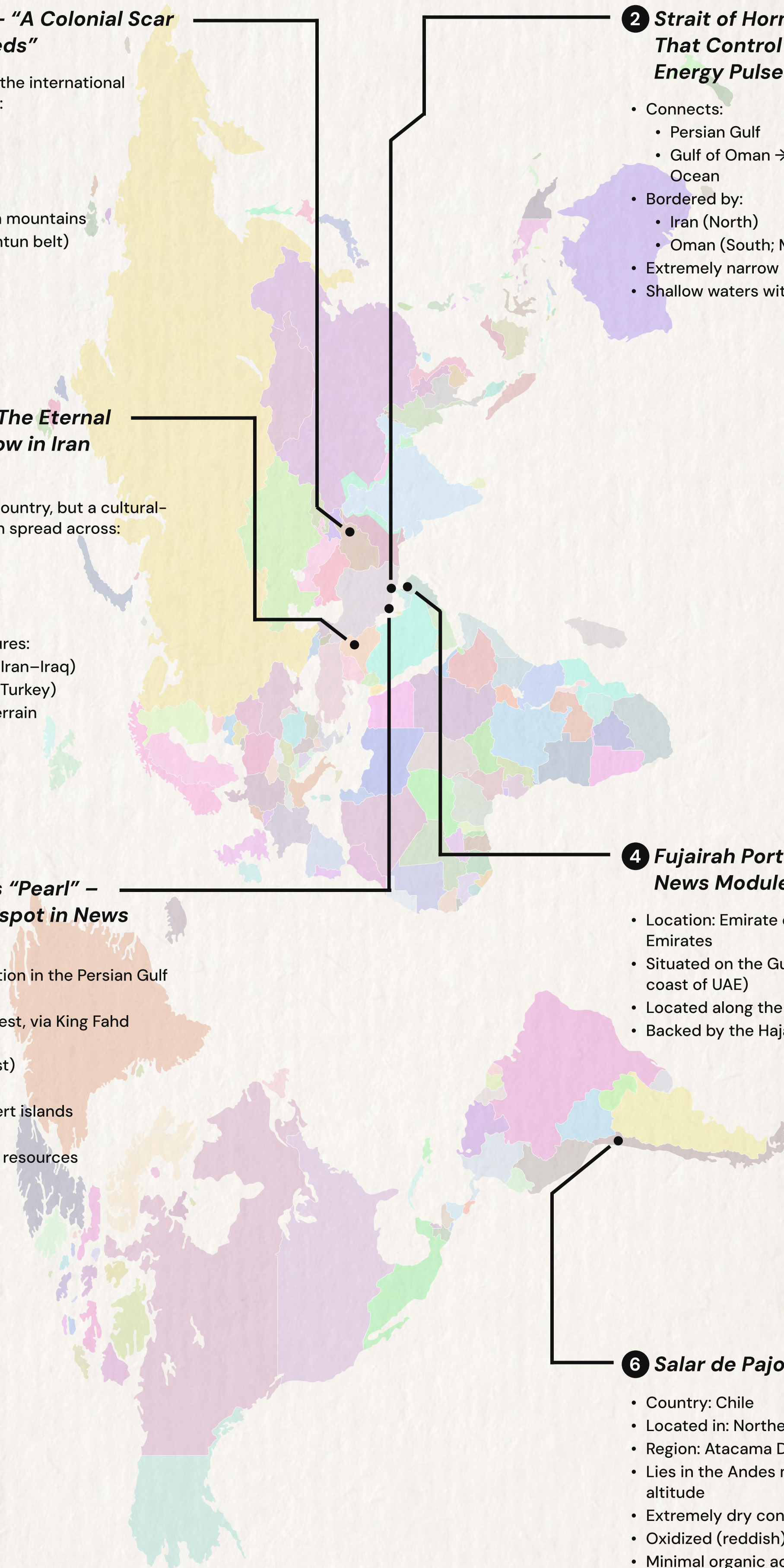
- Country: Bahrain
- Location: Island nation in the Persian Gulf
- Close to:
 - Saudi Arabia (west, via King Fahd Causeway)
 - Qatar (southeast)
- Capital: Manama
- Flat, low-lying desert islands
- Arid climate
- Limited freshwater resources

4 Fujairah Port (UAE) – Place in News Module

- Location: Emirate of Fujairah, United Arab Emirates
- Situated on the Gulf of Oman (eastern coast of UAE)
- Located along the Arabian Sea coastline
- Backed by the Hajar Mountains

6 Salar de Pajonales (Chile)

- Country: Chile
- Located in: Northern Chile
- Region: Atacama Desert
- Lies in the Andes mountain range at high altitude
- Extremely dry conditions
- Oxidized (reddish) terrain
- Minimal organic activity



7 Aras River – Place in News Module

- The Aras River flows through the South Caucasus region.
- Origin: Eastern Turkey
- Flows through / forms borders between: Armenia
Azerbaijan
Iran

8 Litani River – “Place in News” Analysis

- The Litani River is the longest river entirely within Lebanon.
- Originates in the Bekaa Valley (eastern Lebanon).
- Flows south and then west, finally draining into the Mediterranean Sea.
- Israel–Hezbollah tensions in southern Lebanon
- Discussions around UN peacekeeping zones

9 Great Nicobar Island – Place in News Module

- Part of: Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- Country: India
- Located in the Bay of Bengal, close to:
 - Indonesia (Sumatra)
- Southernmost point of India:
 - Indira Point
- Near the Malacca Strait (global shipping route)

10 Kharg Island – Iran’s Critical Oil Hub in the Crosshairs

- Located in: Iran
- Lies in the Persian Gulf
- Off Iran’s southwestern coast
- Small coral island
- Arid climate
- Surrounded by shallow gulf waters
- Targeted due to:
 - Rising US–Iran tensions
 - Broader West Asia conflict
- Handles ~90% of Iran’s crude oil exports (approx.)
- Features:
 - Massive oil storage tanks
 - Export terminals
 - Tanker loading jetties

11 Trincomalee – Sri Lanka’s Quiet Port With Loud Geopolitical Ambitions

- Location: Eastern coast of Sri Lanka
- Lies on the Bay of Bengal (Indian Ocean region)
- One of the finest natural harbours in the world
- Deep natural harbour (no major dredging needed)
- Sheltered by headlands → safe anchorage

12 Darfur Region (Sudan) – Place in News Module

- Region: Darfur
- Country: Sudan
- Located in western Sudan
- Borders:
 - Libya (northwest)
 - Chad (west)
 - Central African Republic (southwest)
- Millions displaced (IDPs and refugees)
- Food insecurity and famine risks

